

Tuesday March 10 1998

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The Guardian INTERNATIONAL

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New focus of Nationalist dissent

This woman has Gerry Adams running scared

G2 with European weather



Analysis

When truth isn't part of the packet

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Education

Fun, lively and maths

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Unionist anger, nationalist joy at halting of extradition

McAliskey goes free



Protesters marching in New York a year ago in support of Róisín McAliskey, who was freed yesterday after 16 months in custody in Britain

Owen Bowcott and John Mullin

JACK Straw last night provoked Unionist anger and nationalist delight by halting the extradition of Róisín McAliskey — wanted in Germany over an IRA mortar attack on a British army base two years ago — on the grounds that she was suffering from poor mental health.

The Home Secretary said medical reports meant that extradition would be "unjust and oppressive".

Ms McAliskey, who gave birth to her daughter, Lionnir, while in custody, has been freed after 16 months. But she is to remain in hospital for further medical treatment said her mother, Bernadette McAliskey, the former MP for mid-Ulster.

The timing sparked a row in Northern Ireland, with Unionists labelling the move another concession to Sinn

Fein ahead of its critical meeting with Mr Blair, probably on Thursday. It will decide whether to return to the multi-party talks at Stormont after the Downing Street summit.

Ian Paisley Jnr, justice

'I am totally disgusted, but not surprised at this sop to the republican movement'

Ian Paisley Jr, DUP spokesman

spokesman for the Democratic Unionist Party, said: "I am totally disgusted, but not surprised at this sop to the republican movement."

One senior Ulster Unionist figure said: "It is cynical. It will exacerbate Unionist percep-

tions that all confidence-building measures go the way of republicans."

The Irish government, under renewed pressure from Sinn Féin to deliver nationalist demands at Stormont, was delighted. David Andrews, Irish Foreign Affairs Minister, said he had raised Ms McAliskey's situation several times with Mo Mowlam, the Northern Ireland Secretary.

Mr Andrews believed Mr Straw's announcement was "in the wider interest of peace". It would "give heart" to those working for a settlement.

But the shadow home secretary, Sir Brian Mawhinney, linked the decision to the Government's "appeasement" of Sinn Féin.

Ms McAliskey, aged 26, was arrested in November 1996 after the German authorities identified her as a suspect in the attack on Osnabrück barracks in June 1996.

She won bail after she was examined by psychiatrists, provided she stayed at the

mother-and-baby unit at the Maudsley hospital in south London.

A Home Office statement said: "The Home Secretary has explained his decision to the German government. It does not reflect in any way on the fairness of the German legal system or on the quality of the extradition request."

Under the terms of the extradition agreement, the British courts did not need to be satisfied that there was a case to be answered. Ms McAliskey's lawyers had heavily criticised the identification evidence linking her to the June 1996 attack, in which there were no injuries.

The German government's arrest warrant said the evidence against her relied upon the statement of an eyewitness who saw her at the IRA active service unit near Osnabrück and that her fingerprints were found on a telephone wrapping.

Her supporters said the eyewitness had retracted his

statement on German television. They suggested that the fingerprints could have been found elsewhere and transferred to Germany.

Ms McAliskey's mental condition is believed to stem from her time in Castlereagh

'It is in the interest of peace and will give heart to those working for a settlement'

David Andrews, Irish Foreign Affairs Minister

holding centre, Belfast, where she was first interviewed. Her solicitor, Gareth Peirce, said: "It's chilling to have the clearest possible evidence that practices that are allegedly part of routine daily police interrogations in

Northern Ireland can lead to complete mental breakdown."

She could not say when she would leave the hospital.

"Her life will not be very different from it has been for a while. But she is no longer facing the firing squad."

John Wadham, director of the civil rights group Liberty, said: "It's a decision that should have been taken many months ago but it's still important that it's happened now."

Mrs McAliskey said last night: "I'm relieved and delighted. We can now concentrate on getting her well again. Expectation of good news from the British government is never something I have lived with easily. And yet I have it and I appreciate it. Maybe I should have more faith."

Altogether, Ms McAliskey spent 16 months in detention after being arrested in November 1996 in Northern Ireland. She was later sent to London, and held in both Belmarsh and Holloway prison.

people to contribute to the relief of poverty and illiteracy in the poorest countries of the world... The Government has already shown its commitment to tackling the problems of international debt because it recognises it is the duty of the world's richer countries to help the poorer countries and their people."

A friend of Mr Brown's described his tactics as harmless, insisting that the Chancellor was just looking ahead, preparing the ground should Mr Blair give up office rather than actively seeking to oust him. Mr Brown, the friend said, came from a party tradition in which people "organised and mobilised".

Blair loyalists see red over little Brown book



Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

AFOUR-page pamphlet sent out by Chancellor Gordon Brown yesterday rekindled the suspicion of Blair loyalists that he still harbours leadership ambitions and is seeking to expand his base in the party.

"Thousands of copies of the pamphlet, headlined A Modern Agenda to Tackle Poverty by Gordon Brown MP, were sent out a fortnight ago to party activists, including constituency secretaries, leading councillors, Fabian Society members and selected MPs. But MPs ultra-loyal to Mr

Blair described Mr Brown's publication as puzzling, given the furore in January after a biography revealed the extent of his resentment at failing to become leader in 1994.

One of the MP's complained that while Mr Brown was repeatedly mentioned, there was only one reference to the Prime Minister. Another MP said: "This is an expensive exercise. Why is he doing it? It is a campaign of some sort."

The MP added: "This is destructive to the Government. It is bonkers."

The pamphlet, paid for by Mr Brown rather than the Government, was put out by "the Office of Gordon Brown MP, Chancellor of the Exche-

quer" rather than the Treasury or party. At the end, it asks anyone interested in further briefing material to write directly to Mr Brown at the Commons.

The arrival of the pamphlet through letterboxes led to a hurried round of phone calls among MPs and ministers loyal to Mr Blair, questioning the Chancellor's tactics. But Mr Brown's spokesman brushed aside complaints that this was part of a covert leadership campaign and insisted it was simply about keeping the party informed. Another pamphlet is planned for after the Budget.

"We have learned from the last Labour government. Hea-

ley did not tell anyone for two years why he was doing what he did. We have been doing this for years and will continue doing it," he said.

The stress in the document is on tackling poverty and extolling the virtues of New Deal, and is a blatant appeal to traditionalists.

Although it is dated January, it was put out only a fortnight ago. "We were just slow in getting it out," Mr Brown's spokesman said.

Reflecting the overall tone of the pamphlet, Mr Brown says in a page devoted to international poverty, another traditional area of concern: "The Government also wants to do more to help British

Inside

Britain

A drunk driver who killed three cyclists after being seen at the wheel with a half bottle of vodka was jailed for seven years.

World News

Workers in Auckland affected by a power cut for three weeks have been advised by their electricity company to take longer lunch breaks.

Finance

Growing passenger unrest for the 24th operating companies to double minimum compensation payments for late trains to £200.

Sport

Northern Irish Paul Grayson was dropped by England's rugby union coach, Clive Woodward, as the club vs country row intensified.

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5 facts about stalkers

1. Under new harassment laws convicted stalkers can receive a 5 year sentence
2. About 1000 people have been charged under these laws in the last 3 months
3. One survey estimates that 14% of British women have been stalked
4. 20% of female murder victims in America were previously stalked by their killers
5. Princess Anne, David Beckham and Helena Bonham Carter have all been stalked



tonight 8.30pm on 5

PEOPLE LIFE NEWS

Sketch

Madcap ways and dogged days



Simon Hoggart

A COMMONS committee which has been looking into methods of bringing Parliament into the 20th century (they've almost two years left to get it right) reported yesterday that the ancient practice of MPs covering their heads to make a point of order during a division had — since the arrival of TV — done more than anything else to bring the House into disrepute.

And it does look silly. MPs sometimes use a battered old opera hat for this purpose, so that they look like stage door johnnies who have just been rebuffed by a soubrette for being drunk.

If the hat is already in use, or no one can find it, they just rest an order paper on their heads. It has been known for members to use a knotted handkerchief, as if they were on the beach at Skegness.

Yet Hansard regards the convention as being important enough to record whenever it happens: "Mr Farnsbarns (seated and covered)..."

They should go in for something more modern and youthful, which doesn't require special equipment, and which would immediately grab the attention of the House even during the hubbub of an important vote. They should be obliged to drop their trousers (or skirts) and moon the Speaker.

Mr Farnsbarns (crouching and mooning) "Madam Speaker, at the risk of speaking out of my backside yet again, may I raise a point of order?"

This would give the House all the Cool Britannia feel of a Chris Evans programme or an Oasis concert.

Labour MPs complained yesterday about another ancient tradition, the filibuster. Last Friday Tory MPs did filibuster the anti-hunting bill, but not in the full American sense, which used to involve ruses such as reading out the phone book for hours.

Under British rules you have to stick to the subject, which is why the Tories had to deploy guile and craft to smother the bill last week.

One ruse was a lengthy quibble about the meaning of the word "dog". James Gray said passionately: "We have to get to grips with the use of the word dog."

Christopher Gill: "In general parlance a dog is taken to be the male of the canine species. Therefore, if the bill is enacted there will be a total exemption for hunting with bitches."

Somewhat unfairly, this was followed by a brief debate about the gender (or "sex" as we used to call it), of Kate Hoey, the Labour MP for Vauxhall. It kept them going for a spell. At another point they started intervening during the interventions.

Yesterday, some MPs were still angry, and tackled the Leader of the House, Ann Taylor. "A denial of democracy," said the Liberal Democrat's Mike Hancock. "People have been sold down the river," said the Tory Teddy Taylor.

Only Labour's Gwyneth Dunwoody seemed to be in favour, pointing out that stalling legislation was just about the last right backbenchers could do. Mrs Taylor told them: "I do share the deep disappointment at the antics of Conservative members." But the fact is that the Government could make time to see the bill passed whenever it wished. It's only because they won't stop hunting MPs are able to stall it.

You can't blame the opponents of a bill for attacking it. The hypocrisy is the Government's: claiming to support the measure as passed by Parliament, but doing nothing to help it, the legislative equivalent of mooning the House.



An ethnic Albanian sends a message to the world during a 50,000-strong protest in Kosovo's capital, Pristina, yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: MADEN ANTONOV

West gets tough with Serbs

Kosovo killings prompt arms ban

San Black in London and Dusan Stojanovic in Pristina

RUSSIA joined the United States, Britain and three other Western countries in backing an arms embargo against Yugoslavia yesterday to punish President Slobodan Milosevic for his crackdown on ethnic Albanians in the Serbian province of Kosovo.

Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, chairing the Contact Group set up to handle the Bosnian war, pushed through four immediate measures and a warning that as-

sets abroad of the Yugoslav and Serbian governments will be frozen if repression in the largely Albanian-populated province continues.

In Kosovo's capital, Pristina, 50,000 ethnic Albanians held their biggest demonstration in a decade, while in nearby Srbice, families refused to bury 60 victims of fighting last week whose bodies had been returned by the Serbs. They included 14 women and 12 children, according to officials of the LDK, the biggest Albanian political party in Kosovo.

As foreign ministers gathered in London, the spectre of the start of the Yugoslav wars of 1991 hung over the meet-

ing. "It's ethnic cleansing all over again," Madeleine Albright, the US secretary of state, said. "The only kind of pressure President Milosevic understands is the kind that imposes a real price on his unacceptable behaviour."

But despite preparatory work it took hours of intensive talk at Lancaster House to agree a modest package.

Mr Cook, Ms Albright and Germany's Klaus Kinkel had to work the telephone to persuade Russia's Yevgeny Primakov — who had stayed in Moscow — to back United Nations consideration of an arms embargo and refusal to supply equipment that could be used for repression or terrorism. The US and the European Union already have an arms embargo.

But Russia would not support denying visas to senior Yugoslav and Serbian officials responsible for repression, or a halt to government

export credits financing Serbian privatisation.

All six countries — which also include France and Italy — condemned the "deplorable" actions of Serbian police and the "terrorist actions" of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). They asked Mary Robinson, the former Irish president and now the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, to visit the province.

Mr Cook and Ms Albright pushed for agreement to empower the Hague War Crimes Tribunal to gather information on the Kosovo events.

Ethnic Albanians, meanwhile, said at least 62 people, including 14 women and 12 children, old men and entire families, had died in the second sweep by Serbian police last week. "The Serb regime has committed an atrocity," said Enver Maloku, spokesman for the ethnic Albanians' Kosovo Information Centre. Some bodies were so

badly burned they could not be identified.

The official death toll from last week's two sweeps of villages west of Pristina included 46 Albanians and six Serb policemen.

Associated Press Television and an AP photographer managed to get into Srbice, which was heavily patrolled by police, and briefly saw a construction yard where dozens of bodies — covered by one long white sheet, with heads and legs protruding — were lined up in two rows.

Police allowed the television crew to film only one body, which they claimed was that of Adem Jashari, the alleged leader of the KLA.

Relatives were refusing to pick up the bodies, demanding autopsies by internationally appointed forensic experts who, the Contact Group said, should be invited in to investigate allegations of extra-judicial killings.

'It's ethnic cleansing all over again. The only pressure Milosevic understands is the kind that imposes a real price'

US secretary of state Madeleine Albright

'We demand that Milosevic commences dialogue with the moderate, peaceful leadership of the Kosovar people'

Foreign Secretary Robin Cook

"We demand that President Milosevic now commences a political dialogue with the moderate, peaceful leadership of the Kosovar people in order to find a solution that provides the increased autonomy that the people of Kosovo want, and to which they are entitled," Mr Cook said.

The Contact Group also endorsed a new mission led by the former Spanish prime minister Felipe Gonzalez, the special representative of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, with a specific mandate to address the situation in Kosovo.

In a move apparently timed to influence events in London, the Serb deputy chief of Kosovo, Veljko Odalovic, announced: "The operation to liquidate the heart of Kosovo terrorism has ended."

Dusan Stojanovic is an Associated Press correspondent.

'People are dying', Q2 page 4

Review

Gusts of genius in a storm of sound

John Fordham

George Russell
Barbican Hall, London

IN HIS 74 years, George Russell has produced some of the most audacious music composed for jazz line-ups or classical/jazz ensembles. His more recent pieces, however, have occasionally seemed rather indigestible in texture and given to excesses of gaudy funk. That made this marathon performance all the more surprising: it was one of the best shows I have seen in 20 years.

The George Russell Living Time Orchestra, which at times expanded to a hybrid symphony-jazz band almost 80-strong, was performing as part of the Barbican's ambitious Inviting America series. But it reached even higher.

In a storm of sound that lasted almost three hours, the mix of American, British and French musicians resembled a vast rock'n'roll band, a Moroccan folk ensemble, a symphonic band playing a boe-down, a free jazz group, a jostling crowd of Dixieland street-stompers and much more.

The six spanned all of Russell's career, from the delight-

ful twisted-bop melody and cruising grooves of the fifties' *Stratusfunk* and the writhing, jostling lines of *All About Rosie*, through the mantralic ostinatos and minimalisms of *Vertical Form VI*, to the current American Trilogy, in which *You Are My Sunshine* plaintively calls across quavering, dissonant chords and thrashing drums.

Almost 40 strings and woodwind players from the Guildhall and the Paris Conservatoire were on stage for much of the time, and in the first set they galloped animatedly through the all-notated *Dialogue With Ornette* on their own.

Under arranger Pat Hollenbeck's direction — a blend of swirly impressionism and headlong, dancing momentum.

Andy Sheppard's powerful tenor sax was prominent among the soloists, as were the trumpets of Russell, regular Stanton Davis and Britain's Guy Barker, the booming trombone of Dave Bargeron, and guitarist Mike Walker. But drummer Billy Ward was almost the star of the night.

At the finale, Russell performed a little Cab Calloway boogie in front of the band, as if the liberated energies had astonished even him.

This review appeared in later editions yesterday.

Caning for politicians on morals

Head of independent schools attacks 'hypocritical' behaviour

John Carvel
Education Editor

THE head of Britain's independent schools yesterday criticised the "hypocrisy" of politicians who expected schools to teach traditional moral values, but were not prepared to uphold them in their private and public lives.

David Crawford, chairman of the Society of Headmasters and Headmistresses of Independent Schools, said teachers were often alone and unsupported when they tried to help pupils form moral values.

In spite of recent efforts by the independent sector to build bridges with the Government, he attacked the personal behaviour of Robin

Cook, the Foreign Secretary, and Lord Irvine of Lairg, the Lord Chancellor. He also criticised William Hague, the Tory leader.

"A cabinet minister can leave his wife, take up with another partner, and expect the taxpayer to foot the bill for accompanying visits to other shores," said Mr Crawford, headmaster of Colston's Collegiate School, Bristol. "Cohabitation at party conferences by unmarried members is all right, and ordering 20,000 beds for official apartments is not untoward. Would we retain our jobs as heads if we behaved similarly?"

Mr Crawford did not name the politicians in his address to the society's annual conference in Grantham, but he left delegates in no doubt that he

was referring to Mr Cook's affair, Lord Irvine's bed and Mr Hague's sleeping arrangements at the Conservative Party conference before his marriage to Pilon Jenkins.

"Who is taking the moral lead? Who is setting the standard for the next generation? Is it the Church? Is it the politicians? Is it the police and judiciary?"

"If the erosion of the nuclear family, if all too often seems to come down to the schools and their teachers in isolation. Standards that are tolerated in other walks of life are not tolerated among heads or teachers, and this is immensely hypocritical."

Mr Crawford's comments received backing from state sector teachers' groups.

Nigel de Gruchy, of the teachers' union NASUWT, said: "You only have to look at someone like Tony Blair who invites pop stars to Num-

ber 10. Many of these people have acted in a very antisocial way and it is outrageous that they are being entertained by the Prime Minister."

He added: "There's a lot of hypocrisy among politicians and some of the things they get up to undermine our work and make it difficult for teachers to teach about morality."

Mr Crawford said society and parents should do all in their power to support schools and avoid having unrealistic expectations of heads and teachers.

The society has 77 members, all heads of independent schools, many with a strong boarding tradition.

Universal state benefits losing support, poll shows

continued from page 1
strong preference for more targeting. Despite the hard-nosed approach to benefits, the poll also found strong support for higher state spending overall and that the Government's hard-line economic policies have led to an erosion of political support.

Asked whether they would like Labour to honour its election pledge to meet the tough spending targets inherited from the Conservatives, 36 per cent said the Government should honour its pledge even at the expense of limiting spending on public services.

This was down 2 per cent on the period immediately before last summer's mini-Budget. By contrast, 58 per cent wanted higher public spending even if it meant breaking the election pledges on tax and public expenditure.

The five interest rate increases since the election

have prompted a sharp fall in voters' perceptions of the parties on the economy. Labour's support has dropped by 12 percentage points to 38 per cent since October last year, while the Conservatives have risen six points to 28 per cent.

Views on the economy tend to closely shadow voting intentions, and the poll shows that Labour's post-election honeymoon is now at an end. Adjusted figures show that the Government's lead — which stood at 36 per cent in October — declined for the fifth successive month.

As a result, Labour's lead is now back to 13 per cent, its lead over the Conservatives at the election last May.

ICM interviewed a random sample of 1,200 adults aged 18-plus by telephone between March 6 and March 8. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults.

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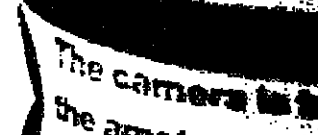
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The camera is the amateur's... a little practice... 8

Victims of social chaos?

March 16, 1997: Two schoolgirls, aged nine and 10, attacked in Kobe. One dies a day later.

May 27: The head of a boy aged 10 is found by a caretaker outside a Kobe school gate.

June 28: Police arrest a boy aged 14 for the two Kobe killings.

January 8, 1998: A youth aged 19, high on thinner, rampages with a knife, killing a girl aged five and wounding a student aged 15.

January 28: A boy aged 13 stabs his teacher to death after being scolded for tardiness.

February 2: A Tokyo boy aged 15 attacks a

policeman with a knife. He later said he was willing to kill to get the officer's gun.

February 20: Legislator Shokei Arai hangs himself at a Tokyo hotel rather than face arrest over illicit stock deals.

February 26: Three businessmen check in to a Tokyo hotel together, share a few drinks and commit suicide, apparently because of financial problems. One man bequeaths his insurance money to his company.

March 9: Makoto Kato, aged 13, is fatally stabbed by a classmate who said afterwards that he wanted to "get even" with his tormentors.

School killings shake Japan

Soaring youth crime has led to wide soul-searching, writes **Jonathan Watts** in Tokyo

A BOY aged 13 stabbed a classmate to death at a school near Tokyo yesterday, the second killing in a series of teenage knife crimes that has been blamed on the disorientating and disruptive social changes taking place in Japan.

After yesterday's incident, the chief cabinet secretary, Kaneko Muraoka, echoed concerns in many recent newspaper editorials and television debates: "It seems to me that the younger generation lacks a basic ethical sense of the importance of life. They appear to be unable to distinguish between right and wrong."

As the government's top spokesperson, he said greater efforts must be made to combat youth crime. But nobody is sure of the cause, let alone the solution. In the past, youth crime was mostly associated with poverty, but most of the recent perpetrators were from middle-class families, described as "ordinary boys who turned without warning".

Psychologists and educators have pointed to the pressures of Japan's exam-intensive education system, the prevalence of bullying, and the effect of video games and manga comics on attitudes toward violence and death.

They say these factors may

have been compounded by the mood of moral uncertainty and economic gloom amid Japan's recent scandals and financial turmoil. This year, there have been seven related suicides, including a legislator who was under investigation in a stock dealing scandal and a group of three businessmen who killed themselves because their companies were on the verge of collapse.

Police said yesterday's victim, Makoto Kato, aged 13, was knifed during a break between classes, after he and five others had goaded the killer at Matsuyama Higashi Junior high school in Saitama prefecture.

The assailant, who has not been named because he is a minor, had reportedly been bullied for months by the victim. Students said he had carried the knife to school for two weeks before the attack. Asked why he had killed his classmate, the boy reportedly answered: "I wanted to get even."

There have been at least 10 other serious knife crimes involving juveniles since the start of the year.

In January, a boy aged 13 stabbed his teacher 10 times with a butterfly knife because she told him off for arriving late in class. Early in February, a boy aged 15 knifed a



Children leave the Kobe school, above, after the first murder. Butterfly knives were banned in Saitama prefecture, below left, after a boy aged 13 stabbed to death teacher Kayoko Koshikazu, right



police in an attempt to steal his gun.

The National Police Agency says the number of juveniles charged for violent crimes such as murder, rape and armed robbery increased by 51 per cent in 1997. People aged under 30 now commit almost half of all crimes in Japan.

The most shocking of these occurred last summer, when a boy aged 14 decapitated a younger playmate and left the head outside his own school gate. Wedged inside the mouth was a note saying the killer was taking revenge on the school system.

Alarmed by the rash of stabbings, the government established a panel this month to investigate ways to protect young people from violence in the media. The police have

asked retailers not to sell knives to minors and many schools have introduced bag searches.

The Saitama authorities recently banned butterfly knives, but it did not cover the three-inch blade used in yesterday's killing.

The school had tried to minimise the risk of violence. After conducting an anonymous survey of its students, which found that 4 per cent carried knives, teachers had held special lectures on the seriousness of life.

The difficulty of such a task was apparent during the dependent court ruling on the boy who stabbed his teacher to death. In sending the suspect to a reform school, the judge noted: "The boy still seems to find it hard to fully grasp the seriousness of what he did."

Body may be exhumed in Woodward appeal

Joanna Coles in Boston, Massachusetts

LAWYERS for Louise Woodward, the British au pair convicted of manslaughter last autumn, yesterday raised the possibility of exhuming the body of nine-month-old Matthew Eappen to try to prove her innocence.

Woodward's defence team also confirmed at a 55-minute appeal hearing in Boston before a panel of seven Supreme Court judges that they may agree to a new trial.

Andrew Good said crucial medical evidence, including a piece of Matthew's skull, had been thrown away before the defence could order their own autopsy. He said the medical evidence which pointed to an old injury was not a matter of conjecture but "one of science" and the case would have ended before it started had they been able to examine the skull fracture.

The age of the injury to Matthew's skull is crucial to the understanding of the case because the prosecution has always insisted that Woodward killed Matthew in a fit of pique after slamming his head on a hard surface on the afternoon of February 4, 1997. But the defence claim the injury was at least three weeks old and could have been an accident or caused by someone else.

Woodward was found guilty of second degree murder by a jury last October. But in a surprise decision 10 days later, Judge Hiller Zobel released her after reducing her conviction to one of involuntary manslaughter and substituting her 15-year sentence to the 279 days she had already spent in custody.

Both sides are appealing against his decision. The defence wants her conviction overturned. The prosecution wants the original verdict and sentence reinstated and argue that the judge overreached his powers.

Mr Good said yesterday: "It's our contention that this case raises a question as to whether a legal judgment in this particular case may flout conclusive, uncontested, scientific evidence."

But Sabina Singh, arguing for the prosecution, said the

medical evidence was not a matter of science but "one of conjecture" and that the jury had rejected the defence's argument and that of medical experts. She argued that Judge Zobel had abused his power and substituted himself as a 13th juror.

"Why should anyone turn up for jury service if their decision can be overturned?" she asked.

Outside the court, Harvey Silvergate, one of Woodward's lawyers, said he was pleased with the judges' questioning which showed they were intimate with the case. They were given written details and transcripts in December.

He said Woodward, who arrived at court with her parents 10 minutes late after being stuck in traffic, was "doing okay". Since being released she has been required to stay in Massachusetts where she has been living with a member of her defence team and babysitting for a staff member at the British consulate.

A fourth member of her team, Barry Scheck, said they would continue to represent her if the Appeal Court decided to order a new trial, even though Woodward has made it clear she could not afford it.

But Paul Spellman, brother of Deborah Eappen, who is expecting another baby in May, said Woodward's sentence "belittled the sanctity of Matthew's life... He was a happy healthy baby," he said.

The seven judges have 120 days to make their decision. They have five options: to reinstate the jury's verdict and original sentence; to uphold Judge Zobel's decision, which would mean Woodward could go home; to call for a retrial; to quash the conviction completely; to uphold Judge Zobel's decision but to impose a heavier sentence which could result in Woodward going back to jail.

Residents of her home village of Eton, Cheshire, last night pledged to start fundraising if the judges order a retrial. "I still believe she is innocent and would like to see her acquitted," said Sandra McCabe, a leading campaigner, after listening to the legal argument broadcast to the village's Rigger pub.

Packer link to Mirror sales talk

Australian tycoon anxious to expand newspaper interests

Kamal Ahmed and Simon Beavis

THE CONFUSION over the commercial future of Mirror Group Newspapers took a further twist last night after reports that Kerry Packer, the Australian media tycoon, was interested in buying parts of the newspaper giant.

With a deal on selling the Independent to the Irish entrepreneur Tony O'Reilly only days from completion, sources said that a team representing Mr Packer and his son James had travelled to Britain to "run a slide rule" over Mirror Group's finances.

The move increases speculation that David Montgomery, Mirror Group chief executive, is looking to sell off some of the company's news-

paper interests. In Scotland, the Sunday Mail and the Daily Record are said to be under consideration as possible sale items while in England the Sunday People is also being looked at.

Reports that Mr Montgomery was looking to rid himself of some of the group's Scottish interests increased when the Mirror, formerly an England-based newspaper, launched in Scotland as a direct competitor to the Record.

The paper is expected to declare its support for the Scottish National Party, in opposition to the Record which is a Labour-supporting paper.

The sales would enable Mr Montgomery to move more of the group's assets into the lucrative world of television, where the group faces a bar at present because of regula-

tions on levels of cross-media ownership.

The news of fresh interest in Mirror Group comes on the day the company announced its results and Mr Montgomery gave a pep talk to all his staff.

During the hour-long talk, which included contributions from other executives and was relayed around the group's offices at Canary Wharf by television, Mr Montgomery said all the newspapers had a bright future and that the group was going from strength to strength.

The group reported a 12 per cent increase in pre-tax profits to £22 million for 1997 yesterday as Mr Montgomery refused to comment on the future of the Independent, citing Stock Exchange rules.

Mr Montgomery told reporters: "We're not allowed to talk about the Independent. You'll have to wait for the announcement if there is an announcement."

Some sources suggested that the deal to sell the Independent titles to Mr O'Reilly hung on the problem of agreeing terms on which to buy out minority shareholders, whose number include one of the Independent's founding fathers in 1968 and its first editor, Andreas Whitman Smith.

Mr Packer's company Publishing and Broadcasting, which is now run by his son James, is keen to expand its media interests.

Mr Packer has been frustrated in Australia by strict rules on media ownership. His attempts to buy the Fairfax Group, owners of the Sydney Morning Herald and the Age in Melbourne, were blocked and he agreed to sell his stake last year and look elsewhere.

Although now semi-retired, Mr Packer, who made his fortune in casinos, betting and buying and selling sporting television rights around the world, is still keen to make his mark in Britain.

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The camera is to art what the guitar is to music: God's gift to the amateur. We've all got a vague idea how it works, and with a little practice we can all have a stab at getting results.

Richard Gott on a boost for a neglected art

G2 page 8



The house where Beverley Hammett had acid thrown in her face

PHOTOGRAPH: TIM CUFF

Man jailed for setting up acid attack

Geoffrey Gibbs

AN OBSESSIVELY jealous husband was yesterday jailed for 12 years for arranging an acid attack on his estranged wife that left a young baby-sitter badly scarred instead.

Beverley Hammett, 21, had concentrated nitric acid thrown in her face when she opened the front door of a secluded home in Seaton, east Devon, in July 1996. She was baby-sitting for the intended victim, Susan Humphrey, 37, who was visiting her sister in hospital.

Miss Hammett, who was studying to be a nanny, has since undergone nine operations to rebuild her face and requires further surgery. The acid thrower has never been caught.

A jury at Exeter crown court took less than three hours to find Peter Humphrey, 51, a household products manufacturer from Axminster, Devon, guilty of aiding and abetting a person or persons unknown to cause grievous bodily harm with intent to his wife.

Judge Graham Cottle told Humphrey: "You have been found guilty of the most heinous crime. There are no words which would accurately describe the character of a man who behaves as you did. You carry the major share of responsibility for ruining a young life."

"For the rest of her life Beverley Hammett will remain cruelly disfigured as a consequence of your evil act."

"The terrible irony of this case is that Beverley Hammett was not the intended victim. You intended that your wife should have nitric acid thrown into her face. Unlike Beverley Hammett, who wore glasses, your wife would in all probability have been blinded as well as permanently disfigured. Your intention was that if you could not have your wife you would make quite sure nobody else would want her."

Humphrey collapsed in the dock as the verdict was announced. He shouted "I am not guilty" to the jury as he was led away to begin his sentence. Mrs Humphrey left the court by a back entrance to avoid waiting reporters.

The prosecution accepted that Humphrey did not throw the acid himself. He was said to have become obsessive following the breakdown of his marriage in 1995.

His jealousy, it was alleged, turned to bitterness and hatred.

After the couple separated, Humphrey went to live with his mother in Axminster. But he returned to the home he had once shared with his wife in Seaton and bugged the property by placing listening devices in electricity sockets and ceiling lights.

Less than two months before the acid attack, he appeared at the house and seized Mrs Humphrey's boyfriend, Craig Millwater, 33, by the neck. Mr Millwater said the attack had caused extensive bruising.

The acid attack happened only days before Humphrey was due to face court proceedings brought by his estranged wife to commit him to prison for allegedly breaching an injunction forbidding him to enter Seaton except for specific purposes.

Humphrey, whose work included the handling of concentrated acids, created a "concrete alibi" by arranging to meet two sisters he had contacted through a lonely hearts advertisement.

Two containers of nitric acid he was to deliver to a company the next morning were found in the back of his car. But he denied drawing off any of the acid.

When the attack took place Humphrey was sitting with the two sisters in the King's Arms pub at Stockland, east Devon. Mrs Humphrey had arranged for Miss Hammett to look after her three children, including Adam, now 14, her son from her first marriage, after her sister had been rushed to hospital. The Humphreys' two daughters, Felicity, 10, and Angelica, five, were also in the house.

Adam said he had been in his bedroom when he saw what appeared to be a man wearing white trainers and darkish clothing walking along the drive.

He went to the landing and saw Miss Hammett put her hand out to open the front door, which was then pushed open. He saw a hand come through the door and "a cloud of gas" appeared around Miss Hammett's face. "I heard a kind of hissing from the gas, and I heard Beverley scream when it hit her."

Someone ran away and he heard a car drive off. He never saw the man's face.

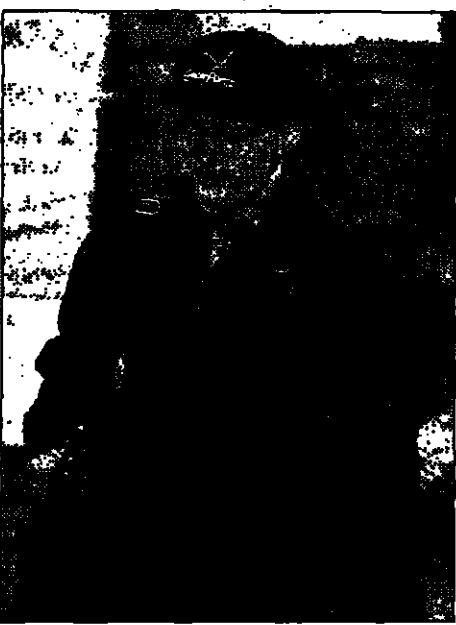
Police, who have released a photo of a man seen asking for directions on the night of the attack, say they have never given up their hunt for the attacker.

Miss Hammett's father, Robin, a fireman, broke down in tears as Humphrey was sentenced and quickly left the court to phone his daughter. She was said to have been "relieved" that justice had been done.



Above, Peter Humphrey whose 'evil act' caused Miss Hammett, below left, to be disfigured. Below right, Humphrey's estranged wife, Susan, the intended target

PHOTOGRAPH: GUY NEWMAN



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News in brief

Prison chiefs and police in jail split

PRISON governors will today urge Home Secretary Jack Straw to overturn the "overuse" of jail sentences which has led to a record number of inmates — as senior police officers urge him to continue with a "robust prison policy", which they claimed yesterday was a direct cause of the recent "fall in crime."

In a speech at the Prison Governors' Association's annual conference in Buxton, Derbyshire today, its chairman, Chris Scott, will tell Mr Straw that a re-think on the use of jail is essential if the prison system is not to collapse, and he will press the case for greater use of community service. "New sentencing guidelines should be issued to courts to ensure that imprisonment is used only for the most persistent and serious offenders," he will say. "This should be aimed at stopping the overuse of imprisonment as the main punishment used by the courts."

On Friday the prison total reached 64,999, compared with 48,794 four years ago.

But in a statement yesterday, Chief Superintendent Brian Mackenzie, president of the Police Superintendents' Association, said "a robust prison policy is essential to control crime". He added that reported crimes dropped by half a million as the prison population rose over the past four years. — *Duncan Campbell*

Sainsbury plea on care

LORD Sainsbury, who was this week reported to have given Labour £2 million before the general election, yesterday warned the Government against abandoning the policy of care in the community for people with mental illness. The supermarket chain chairman said at the launch of research findings on care in the community by the Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health — which challenge calls for a return to institutional care of such people due to concern over incidents of violence — that he wanted to promote discussion of a balanced policy with some supervision for perhaps 5 per cent of patients. "These dreadful incidents have brought the principle of care in the community into disrepute. But that should not happen," he said. — *David Brindle*

New gamble for Diana fund

POOLS firm Littlewoods yesterday launched 10 million scratch cards in aid of the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund. The £1 cards with prizes up to £25,000 — which some supermarket chains have refused to sell — will each raise 20p for the fund, and the firm will match each £25,000 top prize with a similar donation and give all net profits to the fund.

EastEnders beau fined

THE boyfriend of former EastEnders star Danniella Westbrook was yesterday fined £100 and ordered to do 80 hours community service following a car accident. Robert Fernandez, 22, from south London, had pleaded guilty at an earlier hearing to driving while disqualified and at yesterday's sentencing hearing before Redbridge magistrates in east London he was also fined for having no insurance. He was charged following an accident in east London on January 28, in which a car he was driving was in collision with another car. Miss Westbrook, of Chingford, east London, suffered an eye injury. The court heard that Fernandez had told police she was the driver but later admitted lying.

Chorister 'set bad example'

A CHORISTER sacked from a leading choir for bribing a young treble to be sick during a coach trip — so he could get out and have a cigarette — lost his claim for unfair dismissal yesterday. Gavin Rogers-Ball, 30, an alto with Wells Cathedral choir, offered £9 to anyone who accepted the challenge on the journey back from a performance in Germany in June 1996. A 10-year-old chorister took him up on it, but when cathedral chiefs heard of the transaction Rogers-Ball was fired from the choir for the "act of corruption". Yesterday he lost a claim for unfair dismissal at a Bristol industrial tribunal, whose chairman, Clive Toomer, said: "The applicant was... required to set a good example to children." At an earlier hearing, the tribunal was told the coach incident followed other alleged misdemeanours, including reading Private Eye during an ordination and talking during Evensong.

More rights for unmarried fathers

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

UNMARRIED fathers are likely to be given greater parental rights under proposals by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, to bring the law into line with social changes.

At present, married mothers and fathers have equal parental rights and authority. But where parents have not married, the mother has all the rights.

A consultation paper yesterday outlining the proposals said they followed the Government's manifesto commitment "to uphold family life as the most secure means of bringing up children. The Government believes, in particular, that all parents should be encouraged to exercise responsibility for their children."

Under current law, the fact that a man is named as the father on the child's birth certificate gives him no more rights than a man who fathers a child through a one-night stand. Unmarried fathers can acquire "parental responsibility", but only through a court order or a written agreement with the mother which is registered with the court.

Ministers believe the distinction between married and unmarried fathers is out of date now that more than one in three children are born out of wedlock, usually in stable relationships. In 1996, of 648,485 births in England and Wales, 232,663 (36 per cent) were outside marriage.

In 78 per cent of births outside wedlock, the father's details were included on the birth certificate. In three out of four of these joint registrations — and in 58 per cent of all births outside marriage — the parents were living together.

But in 1996, the courts made only 5,587 parental responsibility orders in favour of unmarried fathers, and only some 3,000 parental responsibility agreements are registered each year. The Lord Chancellor's Department says in the paper: "It

appears that many people simply assume that an unmarried father has parental responsibility, especially if the mother and father have jointly registered the child's birth."

Lack of parental responsibility has little effect while parents are living together. But it can be a problem if the parents' relationship breaks down or the mother becomes unable to look after the child, through an accident or illness.

Unmarried fathers have no right to say if the child is put up for adoption or to invoke international treaties on child abduction to try to get their child

returned to the UK. Nor does the fact that a father supports his child financially give him any rights.

"It is a particular source of grievance for some unmarried fathers that they may be forced to support their children financially, whether or not they have acquired parental responsibility."

The department wants responses by May 5 on whether it should go for "the most radical option" of giving unmarried fathers the same rights as married fathers, without the need for special registration procedures or court orders.

'All parents should be encouraged to exercise responsibility for their children'

It also asks whether there should be limited circumstances in which the mother would be able to veto automatic rights for the unmarried father, such as where the child was a product of rape, or where the father had a history of violence.

An alternative would be to give automatic rights to unmarried fathers in a particular category, for example those who sign the birth register jointly with the mother, those living with the mother at the time of the birth, or those a court has declared to be the biological father.

Jim Parton, chairman of the fathers' rights pressure group, Families Need Fathers, welcomed the proposals. "We would like to see virtually automatic rights for unmarried fathers. We accept that there may be some circumstances where parental responsibility wouldn't be appropriate, such as where the child is endangered during rape."

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Tony Madrugo had to go to court to obtain parental responsibility for his two children

PHOTOGRAPH: GARY WEBER

'I felt devastated and used. Penny wanted me to pay but to have no say in how they were brought up'

TONY Madrugo, aged 39, is a self-employed wholesaler from Wood Green, north London. He recently went to court to gain "parental responsibility" for his children.

"I LIVED with my partner, Penny, for more than six years. We had a boy, now aged 13, and a girl, now aged 10."

"Eight years ago we split up and Penny moved to Chichester with the children. It was not too acrimonious and she let me pick them up every other weekend."

"Still, being apart from them was heartbreaking. Of course I carried on paying for their upkeep and I still do."

"A couple of years ago, Penny changed their names to her own. I was very upset and went to a solicitor. I was told that I had no rights whatsoever over my children."

"I felt devastated. I had lived with these children. I was a good father. I paid for them and yet I had no power to look after them."

"I could not afford the lawyers (one firm quoted me £7,000) so I represented myself and lost. I appealed and this time won."

"It was an enormous relief. It was a long battle and I shouldn't have had to have it in the first place. Now I feel like I have a voice again."

Interview by Emily Sheffield

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Vuitton adds clothes to its luxury range of luggage

Sally Brampton in Paris

PARIS fashion week kicked off yesterday with one of the week's top hot tickets: the first fashion collection for luxury luggage-makers Louis Vuitton designed by the American Marc Jacobs.

Jacobs, 34, is best known for bringing grunge — the trashed style of scruffy knits, checked shirts and baggy trousers — off the street and on to the catwalk in the early 1990s. Since then he has adopted a pared-down minimalist that has made him the most famous man among New York's hip set and supermodels. It seemed, at first sight, an odd pairing.

Louis Vuitton is one of the great luxury labels of France.

In 1990 Bernard Arnault took control of the LVMH Group from the Vuitton family. It has done spectacularly well. Worldwide turnover rose from 4 billion francs (£400 million) in 1990 to 8.8 billion francs last year.

Vuitton's first foray into clothing has been two years in the planning. When Jacobs was appointed to the post he promised "No runway shows. That's not the concept."

Arnault, however, has concepts of his own of which a high profile marketing and publicity campaign is the leader.

And you don't get more high profile than kicking off Paris fashion week. Keeping the venue for the show shrouded in secrecy certainly adds to the hype. Journalists on the early morning Eurostar from London had to dash across Paris to grab their invitations — and the address.

The collection of 50 outfits was so achingly hip, so New York minimal that its impact was severely muted. Cashmere sweaters were draped at the hip over long or bell-shaped skirts, both shapes seen extensively last week. Riding macs and jackets based on men's work shirts completed the look. Even the colours — black, white, grey and brown — were minimal.

The clothes contain the sort of inverted snobbery that makes a secret society out of status.

Drink driver who killed three cyclists after vodka spree jailed for seven years

AN ALCOHOLIC who killed three cyclists after being seen at the wheel of his car clutching a bottle of vodka was yesterday jailed for seven years and banned from driving for 15 years.

Andrew Armstrong, 36, of Seaton Sluice, Northumberland admitted three counts of causing death by dangerous driving at Newcastle crown court. He was found to be more than three times over the drink-drive limit after his car crashed into four cyclists.

Bryan Harrison, 38, his brother Alan, 33, and their brother-in-law Don Smith, 49, all from Blyth, were killed. Mr Smith's son-in-law Ray Walls, 25, broke a leg and fractured his right hip.

The crash which happened five days before Christmas left seven children fatherless. Judge David Hodson told Armstrong: "Your outrageous and irresponsible behaviour has killed three hard-working family men and ruined the lives of their loved ones. It's also wrecked

your own life and that of your own family."

"No doubt you were also drinking from the bottle when you were actually driving. Nothing can bring back those you have killed and any sentence will be seen by the families of the deceased as inadequate. In a sense those families would be right."

Peter Harrison, 36, who lost two brothers, was in court with the widows of the three men. He said afterwards: "This is as much as we could

have expected. We're particularly pleased with the 15-year driving ban. I've never heard of such a long ban."

"No amount of time in prison will change what has happened. This has devastated everybody, especially the children. Now we can try and put it behind us."

The court heard how Armstrong, who had battled against alcoholism since losing his job as a lift engineer, had bought a half bottle of vodka to drink at his home on the day of the crash. But

he drank it on his allotment as his sister-in-law was visiting.

He set off along the A193 coast road to take a walk along a beach at Blyth to clear his head after again returning home to find relatives were still there. He had already drunk most of the vodka, and was seen driving erratically. An off-duty policeman on jogging had to dive on to the pavement to avoid the car. He then saw that Armstrong had a half spirit bottle close to his

month. The near-empty bottle was found without its lid in the smashed car.

The cyclists, the court heard, were all wearing helmets and reflective clothing. Their bikes also had lights. They were on the return leg of a Saturday cycling trip and were riding in single file near to their homes.

Mr Walls remembered suddenly being in the air and then landing among debris on a grass verge. He was then confronted with a "scene of carnage", the court heard.

Armstrong had not spotted the cyclists — said to be clearly visible by other motorists — until just before his windscreen shattered.

The car, which was travelling at up to 60mph, came to a rest 50 metres from the scene.

Asked if he had been drinking following the crash, Armstrong told police: "I've had a fair bit." He later asked: "Have I killed someone?"

He was found to have 150mg of alcohol to 100ml of breath — more than three times over the 35mg limit.

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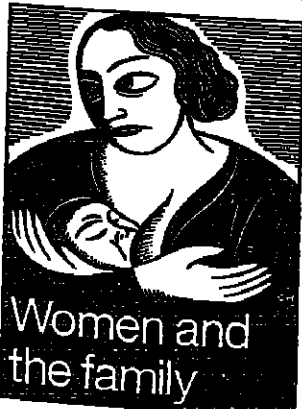
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The Guardian
A little help a big return
M
POLL: Beverley
Zero Man
Argentina



The Chancellor says his Budget is for women and children. In the second of a series the Guardian's panel tell SARAH BOSELEY and SALLY WEALE they want subsidised child care

A little help, a big return

MOTHERS who want to return to work should have their child care costs subsidised by the Government, says a panel of women convened by the Guardian.

While members believe mothers should be allowed to stay at home if they wish to, those who want or need to return to work should be able to leave the child at a low cost day nursery.

There was an awareness of the high cost of child care and most of the panel had taken jobs that were part time or fitted around school hours to avoid having to hand over a large slice of a low wage.

Helen Skilton, 26, who works in administration for a motor company earning £15,000 a year, had decided the cost of child care would stop her having more than one child when she starts a family.

"I did inquire and there was one lady charging £2.35 an hour and another one was from £3-something upwards. The amount of hours that I work in a day, it wouldn't be worth me doing it."

Tamsin Stockley, aged 18, who works part time as a nanny while studying, said: "The lady that I work for, she's a single parent and works full time and she has to pay for a childminder for the little one all day and then she pays for me to look after the two older ones in the afternoon and the evening."

"She doesn't get any benefit because she's at work. When it comes down to it she doesn't have that much money at the end of the day."

The panel also called on the Chancellor to allow mothers returning to work to increase their hours gradually, without having their benefit cut straight away so they could combine work with the needs of a very small child.

Angela McLoughlin, a 24-year-old single mother, said she would like to start working a few hours a week if she could put her two-year-old daughter, Amy, in a nursery she could afford, but was deterred by the fear of losing her benefits.

"That would suit me down to the ground because I wouldn't be missing out on anything, because I would

still see her, maybe every afternoon or every morning. It would gradually get me back into working, because then perhaps when she went to school I could up my hours and then I wouldn't need any benefit."

The panel was divided over the issue of child benefit for everybody. Jo Ayling, a married teacher earning £25,000, said: "I know there are families that don't need it and you read about all of the families who spend it on luxuries."

"Well, don't take it away, but top up the families who haven't got much. Give us a sliding scale of child benefit, but give some to everybody."

All agreed that it should go to the mother, but Angela felt the present system was not fair. "It's the same as family credit. If you earn too much you don't get it, so why can you get child benefit?"

"If you bring home £110 a week you are entitled to £10 child benefit, and yet if you bring home £210 a week you are still entitled to that £10 benefit which really is defeating the object of making equal opportunities. You are giving the rich money and the poor the same amount of money."

There was agreement that taxes should be raised for high income earners — either at £30,000 or £50,000 a year. Jo Ayling, whose partner's income would take the family into the top bracket, suggested a 5 per cent increase.

"We both believe we have a stake in actually supporting people in society. We've gone through the grammar school system, we've gone through the university system. Neither of us are from wealthy backgrounds and we've had free education that has enabled us to do it and I think we should pay more tax."

She also has a radical idea to help young people. She believes that income tax should be reduced to 10p in the pound for everybody under 21 and earning under a certain amount. "They've got to have ownership in society. Young people have got to have a big stakehold in society and to do that they've got to be able to amass some wealth and self-respect for themselves."

Student loans and university tuition fees are a worry to everybody. Joy Porch, a 47-year-old local government

Helen Skilton (above) says the cost of care would stop her having more than one child. Tamsin Stockley (below left), a part-time nanny, says her employer doesn't have much money at the end of the day. Angela McLoughlin, a single mother (below right), says she would like to work a few hours a week but is deterred by the fear of losing benefits. PHOTOGRAPHS: JOANNE O'BRYEN



worker with two children aged 18 and 21, said: "I would like to see them announce in this next Budget that they are abandoning the idea of tuition fees in university."

"I think it would be very sad if we go down the line of making it that you can only have higher education if you have money. It's the haves and the have-nots."

The women all come from the Guildford area of Surrey which they feel is not well served by public transport. Most are horrified by any suggestion that petrol prices should go up. Rachel Francis, 34, a human resources administrator, said: "That payments everybody on low income."

Later she added that she

wanted to see improved public transport. "Especially out this way. It's very, very poor," Jo Ayling added. "Safe public transport."

Housing is also a problem in the area, according to the panel. All want to see more affordable housing, particularly for young people. Rachel Francis said: "Housing is a major priority that is being overlooked — selling off council houses and lack of housing for the very poor people. Low income housing is just not around, especially in an area like this."

Those who have a house are worried about losing tax relief on their mortgage. Joy Porch, called on the Chancellor to stop the erosion. "They

seem to be quietly reducing tax relief on mortgages. I am just looking at selling my house so I know."

"Tax relief was a way of helping people to get mortgages that perhaps they couldn't have afforded and there's not a very good alternative now. Youngsters are going to have to take on such a large mortgage."

Health and education are key concerns. All of them would like long-term investment in both areas, and would even — in an ideal world — like the tax increase to be spent on hospitals and schools.

Jo Wilcox, 47, an unemployed mother of two children aged 20 and 23, said: "I think

the people who are having to pay a higher tax band, say another 5p in the pound should be able to say, 'I would like my 5p to go to perhaps five things. You know, education, national health ... The Government would then have an idea of where the people want the money to go.'

Marilyn Warner, 49, a mother of two earning £40,000 a year as a project supervisor with a large company, suggested either a health tax or an education tax. Joy Porch added she was also concerned about soaring prescription charges, which will go up again next month from 25.65 to 25.80 following an announcement by the Government last week.

Women's needs and men's needs are not always synonymous. Adding what she described as a "flippancy" note, Ayling called for the abolition of VAT on tampons and sanitary towels. "One day the men in Government will realise that it's not a luxury and I think that it's dreadful that we are paying 17.5 per cent for something we don't particularly want."

If there ever was a honeymoon period for the Blair Government, it is long past for Janet Johnson, 50, part time cleaner and mother of two.

She had a powerful message for the Prime Minister ahead of next week's Budget: think he needs to get in tune

with the ordinary people a bit more. Since he's been in it just seems that it's money going to money all the time. He seems to be penalising the ordinary."

Most astonishing of all, not one of our panel knew of the existence of a Minister for Women (Harriet Harman who combines the post with her cabinet role as Social Security Secretary). "I haven't got the foggiest who it is," said one. "What does she do?" asked another.

The panel was recruited and conducted by Opinion Leader Research. Tomorrow Polly Toynbee on the options for child care.

Women's hopes are likely to exceed Brown's limits. Analysis by Mark Atkinson and Charlotte Denny

1. State support for women who want to stay at home with children under five. Families already get state support for looking after children whatever their age in the form of universal child benefit worth £11.45 for the first child and £9.30 for every subsequent child which currently costs £7 billion a year. Poor households also qualify for income support if no one in their household works and household income is below a certain level. If the household contains children it gets a bit extra.

More help for non-working mothers is likely to be announced in the Budget in an increase in the child-rearing component of income support. There are also suggestions of an increase in child benefit rates for all families with pre-school children. Given spending constraints, neither of these moves are likely to be very generous. Financially non-working mums will probably continue to be worse off than their working counterparts.

COST: It would depend how many the 2.8 million women with children under five decided to stay at home. Currently 45 per cent are not working. Boosting their incomes, even by just £20 a week, would cost 1.3 billion.

2. Subsidised childcare so women do not lose most of their wages paying out for a nursery or a childminder. Families or lone parents who receive the in-work benefit Family Credit can subtract some of their child care costs from the earnings figure used to top-up their receipts. But only 35,000 families claim this allowance, or disregard as it is called, and the amount of help they get is limited.

In the Budget, Gordon Brown is likely to do more for working mothers by perhaps scrapping the disregard system and replacing it with a separate, more generous tax credit to cover child care.

COST: Again, it would depend on how the extra spending was targeted. Estimates range from £1.6 billion to £10 billion depending who qualifies for the extra money.

3. Support for mothers returning to work — no immediate cut in benefits as hours increase.

The planned working families tax credit, which will replace family credit, is expected to reduce the rate at which benefits are withdrawn as earnings rise.

At the moment, families on benefit lose 70p from every extra pound above a certain amount, although the starting

point differs by household composition.

COST: If the rate at which benefit is withdrawn was reduced to 45p in the pound, it would cost an extra £1 billion a year.

4. Raise taxes for higher wage earners — ceiling either £30,000 or £50,000, perhaps by 5 per cent.

A political no-hoper. The Government was elected on a manifesto commitment not to increase either the standard rate of income tax, 23p in the pound, or the top 40p rate. Going back on this would, the Government believes, spell electoral suicide.

However, the Government is expected to continue to nibble away at the myriad of tax reliefs and allowances which benefit the higher paid. For example, last year's abolition of tax relief for private health care is widely expected to be followed by a clampdown on inheritance tax dodging.

REVENUE: A new high rate tax threshold of £30,000 would raise £3 billion.

5. Scrap plans for university tuition fees.

It is politically inconceivable that the Government would back down on this one. The money which will be raised once the scheme kicks in has been earmarked for improving quality of higher education and the sector desperately needs the extra revenue.

However, experts say that the Government might change its mind about replacing maintenance grants with a loans scheme, especially as this will impact hardest on students from low income families who have more maintenance to lose.

COST: About £1.7 billion per year.

6. Do not increase tax on petrol.

Another unlikely scenario. Citing environmental concerns, the Government is committed to raising petrol duty by 6 per cent in real, inflation-adjusted terms each year. It is estimated that by 2010 this will save 2.5 million tonnes of carbon pollution annually.

Unfortunately, research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown that this will hit poor families in rural areas hardest since motoring costs account for a much bigger proportion of their income than middle class and rich families, who often have more than one car and are therefore the biggest polluters.

REVENUE: Above-inflation increases in petrol duty are also big money spinner for the Treasury which takes in an extra £260 million a year.

ICM POLL: Beveridge principle of universality loses favour as voters back idea of targeting help towards the needy

Larry Elliott Economics Editor

WOMEN and voters with young families are the staunchest defenders of universal child benefit and state-subsidised child care, according to today's Guardian/ICM poll.

Although the findings showed a majority in favour of targeted help among both men and women, there was clear evidence of age and gender affecting attitudes.

Party allegiance appears to have little effect on how people feel about welfare issues relating to children. Conservatives are more likely to voice opposition to any state support, but Labour voters are the strongest proponents of targeted assistance.

On child benefit, a representative sample of voters was asked whether they wanted to maintain the system of universal payments to all mothers, or whether they wanted to target the benefit on the poorest. The poll found that 55 per cent of Labour voters favoured targeting on the poor, against 44 per cent of Conservatives and 39 per cent of Lib-Dems. However, 10 per cent of Conservatives wanted child benefit scrapped against 4 per cent of Labour supporters.

Overall, 18 per cent said the Government should provide subsidised child care for everyone, 28 per cent that help should just be for those earning less than £20,000 and 37 per cent that it should be aimed exclusively at those trying to get off benefits and into work. Eleven per cent opposed subsidies altogether.

Twenty-two per cent of women said the Government should subsidise child care for everyone while only 14 per cent of men were in favour. ICM interviewed a random sample of 1,300 adults aged 18-plus by telephone between March 6 and March 8. Interviews were conducted across the country and the results have been weighted to the profile of all adults.

Fewer than one third of voters (29 per cent) favoured the continuation of the status quo, while almost one half (47 per cent) supported targeting the benefit on the most needy. There was little support (15 per cent) for taxing child benefit and only 7 per cent said it should be scrapped.

However, 32 per cent of women supported paying universal benefits against 25 per cent of men. Among the 25-34 age group — the likeliest section of the population to have young children — 39 per cent were in favour of the current system against 44 per cent supporting targeted payments.

People of pensioner age were the most likely to support an end to the Beveridge principle of universality, with 16 per

Child care questions

Do you think the government should subsidise child care, so that parents can go out to work?	Total	Male	Female	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	AB	C1	C2	DE	Cons	Lab	Lib	Dem	Others
For everyone	25	14	22	15	25	28	25	22	18	23	19	15	16	17	25	18	18	18
Limited to those earning less than £20,000 per year	32	32	24	35	28	25	22	20	15	38	29	29	23	25	18	22	24	24
Limited to those seeking to get off benefits and into work	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	22	38	40	37	34	32	34	35	35
Not for anyone	12	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	10	11	12	13	15	18	11	10	10
Don't know	8	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	9	9	9	11	10	10	10	10	10
From April 1 the government will pay parents £11.45 per week child benefit for the first child and £9.30 for each subsequent child. Do you think this child benefit should be paid?	Percentage of all respondents																	
To all people irrespective of their current income as at present	25	25	32	25	25	25	25	25	25	27	27	34	27	25	25	25	25	25
Increased but taxed so that its value is lower to higher rate tax payers	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	25	19	11	8	15	15	15	15	15
Limited only to those who need it and increased in value	50	50	45	50	50	50	50	50	50	44	47	45	52	44	44	44	44	44
Not paid out to anyone at all	7	7	8	7	7	7	7	7	7	5	5	8	5	10	10	10	10	10
Don't know	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	1	6	3	3	3	3	3

Source: Guardian Opinion Poll

The Guardian Readers Evening

Piero Manzoni Serpentine Gallery

The Guardian is offering readers the chance to enjoy an exclusive viewing of the Serpentine Gallery's inaugural exhibition Piero Manzoni.

You'll receive a free exhibition guide (worth £3), enjoy a glass of wine courtesy of Selfridges and hear Guardian Arts Critic Adrian Searle talk about Manzoni's work and influences.

7pm-9pm, Thursday March 26

Tickets £6 available from Ticketmaster on 0990 83 43 33 (24 hours a day)

Piero Manzoni can be seen until April 26.

The exhibition is sponsored by: SELFRIDGES

in association with The Guardian

French right fears losing strongholds

Paul Webster in Paris

EDOUARD Balladur, France's former Gaullist prime minister and defeated presidential candidate, will address a rally in Paris tonight to try to prevent the humiliating loss of the most powerful of the country's 32 mainland regional assemblies, the Ile de France, which represents the capital and its surrounds.

Mr Balladur met women politicians at the weekend to ask them to "knock the Socialists off their little pink cloud". Opinion polls show that Lionel Jospin's leftwing government is so popular that, in a one-round vote on Sunday, most rightwing regional strongholds will fall.

Although opinion polls show the orthodox right marginally ahead in the eight rich départements of the Ile de France, Mr Balladur's official team is threatened with losing thousands of votes to the five lists of dissident Gaullist and centrist candidates.

The racist National Front, already the second biggest single movement in the assembly, could have the decisive vote when councillors elect the assembly's new president on March 20.

Mr Balladur, prime minister from 1993 to 1995, was a last-minute choice to lead the joint Gaullist-centrist list, after the Ile de France's outgoing president, Michel Giraud, was bypassed because of suspicions of corruption.

The right is fighting to maintain its control of the assembly's £1.5 billion spending on public transport, education, development, tourism and culture.

Forecasts give the conservatives 35 per cent of the vote, the left 33 per cent, and 16 per cent to Jean-Marie Le Pen's extremists, who hold 37 of the assembly's 192 seats.

In national polls, the combined left has 38 per cent, the right 36 per cent, and the National Front 14 per cent.

The left presides over only two of the 22 mainland regions, but Socialists, Communists and Greens would probably trade several potential provincial gains for the presidency of the Ile de France, with its population of 11 million and the power to override the Gaullist-led Paris city council in some policy areas.

During the campaign there were constant attacks on the right for alleged widespread corruption in the Paris region. Such claims reached a peak while Mr Balladur, a Paris MP, was prime minister. He forced the ministers under suspicion to resign, but that may not be enough to outweigh his personal unpopularity.

Seen as a snob, he is considered by dissident conservatives a bad choice for a touch-and-go election where most voters live in industrial suburbs.

He also made many enemies in his own camp when he challenged the Gaullist party leader, Jacques Chirac, for the national presidency in 1995, before finishing a poor third behind Mr Jospin.

Since then he has been associated with anti-Chirac politicians.

However, some Socialists believe internal party quarrels may affect their own chances.

Jean-Paul Huchon, the Socialist candidate for the Ile de France's six-year presidency, is not well known, and his popularity has not been improved by a break with the former prime minister Michel Rocard, who also wanted the presidency. Mr Huchon was Mr Rocard's political protégé.

Mr Huchon's bid is inspired largely by personal enmity for Mr Balladur. In 1996 he was summarily dismissed as chairman of the Credit Agricole bank by Mr Balladur, then finance minister.

Balladur called for the Socialists to be 'knocked off their little pink cloud'

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A woman hangs out the washing in Brod, a village 20 miles north of Tuzla, where Bosnian Muslims are returning, three years after the war, to rebuild their homes and lives

Moscow sees world through eastern eyes

James Meek sees the post-cold-war consensus at risk as the Russians close ranks

THE use of force was revolting, said the Russian foreign minister, Yevgeny Primakov. There had been a "glaring violation of elementary human rights".

The prime minister, Victor Chernomyrdin, was equally outraged. "Our people shuddered at what happened. It's impermissible that human rights should be violated like this at the end of the 20th century."

The death of dozens of people in Kosovo was far from their thoughts. The conflict which so perturbed Russia's ruling elite was one of the rest of the world barely noticed: the breaking up by Latvian police of a protest meeting of about 2,000 elderly ethnic Russians in the capital, Riga.

It was a further sign of what became clear during the latest Iraqi crisis: the world-views of Moscow and Washington are on increasingly divergent paths and the breakdown of the fragile post-1991 security consensus is a question of when, not if.

Hours after a Russian foreign ministry official denounced Western threats to renew sanctions against Belgrade as unacceptable, President Boris Yeltsin's senior foreign policy adviser, Sergei Yastrebinskiy said Moscow was considering the unprecedented step of unilateral sanctions against Latvia.

While there is sympathy in the West for Moscow's complaint that the many ethnic Russians in Latvia are denied civil rights, the threat of sanctions will disconcert Europe and the US.

No injured were reported in the Riga demonstration, which was a protest at high utility bills, not racial discrimination.

The row, early last week, prompted the kind of solidarity Moscow showed in respect of Iraq. Gone are the days when a pro-Western foreign ministry and presidency ignored Russia's nationalist parliament.

The ultra-nationalist parliamentary faction leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy kicked off with a noisy protest in the Duma. Mr Primakov picked up the ball and passed it to Mr Chernomyrdin, who touched it down in the Kremlin.

Western Europe and the US look like facing the same Russian unanimity on the latest Yugoslav crisis. The chance of keeping Moscow behind sanctions, let alone military action, is slim.

Mr Primakov chose not to attend yesterday's Contact Group meeting, sending a deputy, but is due in Belgrade next week.

As with Iraq, Russia's interest in having Yugoslavia left alone is more commercial than sentimental or anti-Western. In December the Yugoslav prime minister, Radjko Kotic, was warmly greeted in Moscow by Mr Chernomyrdin and given a \$100 million trade credit.

His defence minister, Pavel Bulatovic, said after meeting his Russian counterpart that Yugoslavia wanted to buy "the most up-to-date Russian weapons and repair the arms and equipment it already has".

Russia's emergent foreign policy is a kind of crooked homage to the United States. The buzz words of Moscow's armchair geopoliticians — national interest, vital economic interests, spheres of influence — are all lifted from US policy speak.

That makes it no easier for diplomats trying to keep any one of the many points of tension with Russia from leading to the first serious breakdown in relations since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Satisfaction at Mr Primakov's endorsement of limited Nato expansion and the cooling of the Iraqi crisis is already fading as Kosovo and the Baltic states' desire to join Nato loom.

Russia's determination not to be done out of a profitable deal is spawning numerous other disagreements with Washington, from its supply of anti-aircraft missiles to the sale of nuclear reactors to the US.

Moscow remains heavily dependent on Western loans to fund its arduous slog towards a functioning market economy. If the West ever got to the point of threatening to cut that money off it would mean the post-cold-war consensus had already broken down.

Mr Primakov told the new intake of young Russian diplomats on Friday that they should consider their country a world player in a world arena.

"The role of a world power is not an aim in itself, but a thought-out role for Russia in a difficult, zigzag transition to a multipolar world," he said.



Yevgeny Primakov: Picked up the ultra-nationalists' ball and passed it on towards the Kremlin

Hatchet far from buried in Poland's battle for bodies

Neil Bowdler in Gdansk

THE atmosphere is tense on Jaskolka street, a disreputable backwater of Gdansk.

At number one, a bodyguard patrols the entrance to Tanatos, a funeral services company. Proprietor Jolanta Blaszkiewicz, clad in black and leopard print, sits by her window, fearing the next chapter in an unwholy war.

The first Molotov cocktail was cast into a company hearse at the end of January. A week later a second smashed against the wall of the office.

Next door, in more humble surroundings, Antoni Wykowski sits by a brimming ashtray, steel piping ready by his side. A car belonging to his Last Service undertakers was attacked with a sledgehammer. The next day his elderly sister, a black and leopard print, attacks, was set upon by a stranger with a stun-gun.

"That woman's not from this earth," she says of her neighbour, a former Last Service employee and the figure she blames for her assault.

Over at Maciej Kotlowski's Funeral Centre security cameras are planned, an alarm has been installed and insurance cover purchased after their hearse was petrol-bombed last month. The owner has been implicated by Ms Blaszkiewicz's son in the attack on Tanatos. Mr Kotlowski, in turn, blames Tanatos for the attack on his business.

He and three other undertakers, including Last Service, have got together to gather "evidence" to support his allegations that Tanatos is prospering at others' expense thanks to bribes paid to doctors and ambulance crews who prey on the grieving.

But it is notable that Tanatos has ruffled the feathers of other undertakers, becoming one of the main players in the business just 18 months after setting up.

"Someone dies and someone jumps up with a [Tanatos] calling card," he says, alleging that doctors can make a minimum of £100 per corpse providing such a service to Ms Blaszkiewicz.

In the neighbouring city of Gdynia, ambulance workers have reportedly been seen exchanging their whites for black and burying the corpses for which they were earlier called out in their ambulances.

Another undertaker has gone so far as to hire out a refrigerator to a local hospital. When the families arrive to identify their loved ones, an assistant is on hand to convince the grieving to engage the services of the undertaker in whose fridge their relative lies.

The Tanatos chief has a different explanation for her success in becoming one of the main undertakers in Gdansk.

"Our workers are clean and sober — there's no one by the grave rocking from side to side drunk. Families for whom we have buried one person return to us when others die and recommend us to their friends," says Ms Blaszkiewicz.

She does, however, agree with her rivals on the hazards of capitalism run riot. With the petrol bombs flying she has to admit: "The competition's unhealthy."

Indonesia in crisis

Suharto defies his students and IMF

John Aglionby and Iwan Farnham in Jakarta

THOUSANDS of students chanting their rejection of President Suharto demonstrated across Indonesia yesterday as the financial markets gave a massive vote of no confidence in the world's fourth most populous country by at one point wiping 20 per cent off the value of its currency, the rupiah.

A Jakarta-based international banker said he was warning clients the situation was teetering on the brink of economic, political and social anarchy.

Despite dire warnings of economic meltdown if he rejected reforms demanded by the International Monetary Fund, President Suharto and Indonesia's ruling elite gave no indication yesterday that they were willing to meet the conditions for the disbursement of the fund's \$40 billion rescue plan.

Instead, Suharto had himself formally nominated yesterday as the sole candidate in today's mockery of a presidential election, while the rhetoric emanating from the president's powerful family and other members of the elite became increasingly nationalistic.

Thousands of students from the University of Indonesia in Jakarta had gathered outside the building housing the country's highest sovereign body, the People's Consultative Assembly, demanding that delegates not nominate Mr Suharto for what would be his seventh five-year term as a virtual dictator.

They also demanded an end to the economic crisis which has seen prices rise by as much as 400 per cent, left the rupiah worth less than a quarter of its value of a year ago, caused 50 per cent of Indonesian companies to become technically bankrupt, and left tens of millions of people out of work.

Four of President Suharto's six children, all of whom have amassed huge personal fortunes during his presidency, defended their father's decision to backtrack on the reforms he agreed earlier with the IMF.

His second daughter, Siti Hediati Prabowo, said: "We defend the IMF, but not if we are continually being repressed with this-and-that conditions".

Her elder brother, Bambang Trihatmodjo, asked: "Why should we keep being dictated to by foreign parties?"

Disarmaged by the speed of reform, the IMF has delayed the next \$3 billion tranche of the loan. Analysts believe that as Indonesia's economic situation is deteriorating daily, the delay will postpone any recovery from weeks to months.

Anthony Davies, the president and director of PT Merrill Lynch Indonesia, said it was now apparent the country's depression was much deeper than the government was admitting. He predicted the economy would contract by 7 per cent this year, and would not remain at standstill as President Suharto had predicted in his January budget.

"Thirty years of development have been wiped out in six months of chaos," he said. He said it would take Indonesia from six months to two years to begin reversing this negative trend in its economy.

A student leader, identified as Achmad, said: "We not only reject President Suharto's account of his last five years in power, we also reject his candidacy for president for the next five years."

Apart from Jakarta, student demonstrations were also held in the cities of Bandung, Surabaya and Semarang on Java, and Ujungpandang on Sulawesi, where 3,000 marched through the city to the provincial legislature demanding political reform and an adequate supply of essentials.

Their calls will be in vain, however, as the peasant-turned-dictator, who has ruled Indonesia for 32 years is guaranteed reelection today. Not only is Mr Suharto standing unopposed for the seventh successive time, he personally appointed the vast majority of the 1,000 Assembly members.



A student demonstrator hands a flower to a policeman during a rally against President Suharto in the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, yesterday

New Zealand power firm serves up long lunches

Christopher Zinn in Sydney

AFTER an appeal to God to deliver them from darkness, the people of Auckland, who have been hit by the collapse of the city's power supply almost three weeks ago, have been advised by their electricity company to take extra-long lunches.

Mercury Energy wants office workers in New Zealand's largest city to turn out the lights, leave their workplace and take two-and-a-half-hour lunch breaks.

The beleaguered utility appealed in full-page newspaper advertisements for 60,000 office workers to return to the city centre so cafes, bars and restaurants do not go broke.

But the hundreds of businesses which have been without power since four major cables failed on February 20 have their own scheme to cut their losses. They plan to sue. An Australian law firm plans to file a class action for more than 400 businesses which have been without power — and customers — since the unprecedented breakdown.

More than 120 blocks have been without power or subjected to power rationing — coinciding with a heatwave that has stretched tempers to breaking point.

On Sunday parishioners of St Patrick's Cathedral offered prayers for help to rectify the crisis.

Mercury Energy announced their patness and possibly popular "win-win" long-lunch strategy because 40 high-rise office blocks in the business district use

70 per cent of the city centre's power.

The advertisement read: "If larger corporates [businesses] could plan their activities into a longer lunchtime from 11:30am to 2pm and turn off the power as they leave — this could allow shops to stay open over the lunch break."

However the local Sunday Star-Times newspaper was

unimpressed.

"For companies that have been struggling for nearly a month to cope with an increasingly erratic power supply, such belated advice reeks of telling granny how to suck eggs," said an editorial.

Mercury Energy is calling its initiative the Apollo 13 means plan and is hoping to inspire the public with the story of the astronauts who survived a power failure.

But many businesses, which have lost sales worth an estimated \$37 million, remain sceptical of the plan because they are already saving power.

"We've been doing that all along since day one," said Doug McLaren, spokesman for the Retail and Wholesale Merchants' Association. "I don't think it is likely to do the job."

It will take up to 10 weeks to install a new emergency power cable to the city centre. Yesterday afternoon the city had 135MW of power flowing into it, the most since the power grid collapsed but still 45MW below normal demand on hot days.

Many companies have relocated employees because generators are too weak to power air conditioning.

Congress looks to Sonia again

Suzanne Goldenberg

INDIA'S political spotlight shone on Sonia Gandhi yesterday, as the president of her family's Congress party resigned and begged the Italian-born widow to take control.

Although Congress's appeals to dynastic loyalty have

taken on the air of ritual, the resignation of octogenarian Sitaram Kesri showed he had finally acknowledged the extent of his unpopularity among party workers.

However, the other woman politician on centre stage since last month's elections bridled yesterday at the prospect of Mrs Gandhi's succession. "I do

not consider her a politician," said J. Jayalalitha, whose Tamil regional party has emerged as kingmaker in the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party alliance which hopes to be installed in government this week.

Mrs Gandhi as prime minister would be "the greatest tragedy" that could befall India.

0800 769 0033

Comment

Diary

Matthew Norman

REPORTS that his staff are close to mutiny because of Lord Irvine's Olympian rudeness cause the Diary grave concern, and in a bid to resolve these difficulties we seek advice from a man whose civility towards underlings is the stuff of fable. "I'm 62 now and have had Mr Fraser," (that's John Fraser, MA Oxon, MPhil) working for me since I was 14," Michael Winner explains. "At school, he would clean my room for 2/6, and do my dish-washing chores for sixpence a time." So could you please pass the secret of staff relations on to his Lordship? "If you tell them off and you are incorrect," counsels Michael, "you must apologise clearly. Be fair and generous. If they work for a long time and don't get overtime, treat them to a holiday. Lord Irvine should take them to the South of France, get his swimsuit on and throw beachballs at them." So there it is. Our thanks to Michael, and apologies that the campaign to clear his name, after he was accused of reducing a receptionist at Le Gavroche to tears, has been abandoned.

THE Watford Observer has been chasing a story of blatant racism, after a tip-off that a local draper's shop was offering a 20 per cent discount on certain items, but only to Islamic customers. The paper dispatched an investigative team at once, but they returned with nothing. They remained baffled, in fact, for several hours, until a colleague wondered aloud whether "20 per cent off muslim" was ever going to be a live candidate for the front page.

AT the Independent on Sunday, editor Rosie Dobson gave a tip-off that a rolling regatta of resin, shows a mischievous touch. Cutely placed in the page opposite the one containing the latest on the paper's exhilarating campaign to legalise cannabis was an advert headlined "Grow your own... grow your own... it plants all year round." If and when Andrew Marr returns as editor-in-chief of both titles, as part of a Tony O'Reilly buy-out, this merit may cease. Until then, I am obliged to repeat the plea that we should name of sanity, Rosie, I'm begging you, please, take more tobacco with it.

MEANWHILE, following the accusation that Frank Dobson gave a tip-off that a rolling regatta of resin, shows a mischievous touch. Cutely placed in the page opposite the one containing the latest on the paper's exhilarating campaign to legalise cannabis was an advert headlined "Grow your own... grow your own... it plants all year round." If and when Andrew Marr returns as editor-in-chief of both titles, as part of a Tony O'Reilly buy-out, this merit may cease. Until then, I am obliged to repeat the plea that we should name of sanity, Rosie, I'm begging you, please, take more tobacco with it.

POLICE in the Brazilian town of Recife have come close to paralysis after 100 patrol cars were impounded. They were confiscated, reports Bizarre, when it was discovered that they were stolen vehicles the police had failed to reunite with their proper owners. Worst hit, perhaps inevitably, was the specialist anti-car-theft unit, all 40 of whose cars were hit.



'Government after Blair will be weaker: less free to invent a poll tax or demonise dangerous dogs: a very good thing, say I'

PHOTOGRAPH MARTIN ARQUES

Where's Tony Blair heading? On a journey into history, no less

Hugo Young



TONY BLAIR is a conservative who is utterly indifferent to tradition. He is a conservative and a radical at the same time. Next week, the second Blair-Brown Budget, though heavy on tax reform, will be an exercise in conservative economics of the most slavish kind, to which he is plainly committed as an act of faith. But he is also completely scornful of the way politics has been done. Fixated on his economic caution, which Blair sees as essential proof that Labour has broken with its past, we can easily miss the depth of his irreverence for the other part of the past, with which Labour was also once fearfully besotted: the ancient pillars of the constitution.

Mr Blair's abiding radical passion is to keep Conservatism out of power. Otherwise a moderate and amiable man, here he is a cold extremist. Though a conservative in some central ways, he cannot stand the Tory Party. He thinks it stole the history of this century, which he's determined shall be avenged in the next. Observing it now to be moving even further to the right, he's even more determined that Toryism's rival force, progressive modernity, under whatever guise, shall have the decades due to it.

This is the context in which to see the speculations now swirling round the two most daring upheavals of tradition, House of Lords reform and a new electoral system. After a period of temporising, both are acquiring priority status.

The one grows out of Mr Blair's zeal for modernising, the other from his belief in power.

Lords reform appeals to his mission for systemic change. Apart from the timeless truths of the Christian religion, there are few elements of the past about which he has ever uttered a word of admiration. He is purged of any affectionate sentiment for ritual. Flummery, I believe, is something he doesn't even find amusing. If the State Opening of Parliament becomes only a five-yearly event, he will regard that as a signal that Britain is becoming a new, young country. If he proposes such a curb on ceremony, he knows he will be doing so to a royal family itself so desperate to modernise that it will offer the resistance of melting wax.

It is elementary, therefore, to get rid of the hereditary peers, itself a substantial cultural shift. But once that is done, it becomes equally compulsory to find a credible alternative, the task Lord Irvine, another anti-traditionalist in everything save the preservation of Pugin, has added to his portfolio. Many people think this task is impossible, as it has always proved to be before. But to a raging moderniser, who has no time for tradition, its apparent impossibility is a challenge he is bound to meet.

The range of alternative options, which came to seem mutually self-cancelling to reformers of the past, seems less formidable to the true Blairite for another reason: the fact that his or her lightness of respect, their want of paralysing adoration, extends to the House of Commons. The notion of a wholly nominated second chamber is antipathetic on every count, but the alternative is a chamber with sufficient legitimacy to challenge the Commons sometimes — is no longer, to these people, as horrific as it was and is to traditionalists.

The moderniser, in fact, is obliged to embrace it. And the

chief moderniser has already shown a willingness greater than that of any predecessor in history to contemplate the curtailment of executive power that suchlike reforms imply. Scottish devolution and the human rights bill, along with statutory freedom of information, all remove power from cabinet ministers. To a prime minister of this disposition, who wants the modernising of Britain engraved on his record, giving a new senate, shall we call it, the right occasionally to obstruct him is a small price to pay for the inextinguishable place it would give him in the annals of modernity.

He is not, however, uninterested in power. Lords reform, in power terms, is acceptable: in modernising terms it is axiomatic. Electoral reform, by contrast, has nothing to do with modernity. There is no great demand for it, the present system is not a manifest excrement, every system has its pros and cons, many modern states find proportional systems, such as Britain is now contemplating, an impediment to the modernisation of society. But, for a leader dedicated to marginalising the Conservative Party in perpetuity, a controlled electoral reform has many attractions.

THIS is why Mr Blair's apparently sceptical agnosticism about PR is beginning to look like the shrewd prelude to a change of heart brought about by Lord Jenkins's investigatory commission, which will surely be recommending some permutation of the alternative vote in the autumn. Mr Straw now says he is "perfectly relaxed" about AV: words spoken like a trooper, by a man hitherto proud to be the leading enemy of reform. A two-stage reform

pushing for the ultimate break with Britain and achieving independence, the former thought its package of political devolution would at least help to lance a long-running nationalist boil and keep Britain united.

With Labour triumphant after delivering a key manifesto pledge — and, more importantly, with Tony Blair's insistence on a referendum amply vindicated — the SNP clearly had much ground to make up.

In its wildest moments, it could not have imagined that the task would have been so relatively easy. Bungled investigations into municipal cronyism, and sleaze in Glasgow and Renfrewshire, by the Labour machine in London over the past few months, have not helped the cause of the fireless Donald Dewar, who has been championing political devolution for most of his political life. A series of

rank-and-file rebellions at Labour's Scottish conference in Perth last weekend, over Trident, benefits to lone parents, and student fees, have handed opponents some welcome ammunition, to the alarm of the leadership. With elections to that Scots parliament just over a year away, some

comrades appeared more content with hammering New Labour than in attacking the real enemy of nationalism: the Tories.

The timing of the first Scottish parliamentary election — May, 1999 — could not be worse for Labour with Chancellor Brown still keeping a tight reign on

spending. What can ministers offer Scots as an inducement next May when they have to elect 128 parliamentarians (MSPs) by first-past-the-post with the remaining 56 by a form of proportional representation from party lists?

Dewar could take comfort from polls which credit Labour with more than double the support of the SNP (49-28 in an ICM survey for the Scotsman). But ask how people will vote in a Scottish parliament election, and the figure changes — with nationalist support rising seven points to 30 per cent. If those figures were reflected in a Scottish parliament, Labour could end up the largest party with perhaps 63 MSPs while the SNP might take 36 seats, leaving the Tories and Lib Dems with the remaining 30. Such a split would clearly herald a Lab-Lib administration.

What John Prescott actually said was this: "These systems of multiple millionaires being developed from privatisation is a matter of great regret, but I don't have the power to be able to change that." As Lord Acton might have put it if he had applied his mind to modern labour governments, "Impotence tends to corrupt. Absolute impotence corrupts absolutely."

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The gravy trains

Paul Foot



I'VE BEEN itching for months to write a speech for a secretary of state. So here's one for John Prescott. "This month my department has to deal with one of the most outrageous scandals of our time. Thirty-five years ago, the nation was shocked when a gang of thieves stole £2.8m (£35m at today's prices) from a train. This became known as the Great Train Robbery. Now we are dealing with a train robbery which has stolen £1 billion — 30 times more than in 1963 — from all of us. The robbery was set in motion by the current chairman of the Tory Party, Lord Parkinson, when he was secretary of state for transport. It was carried through with great zeal by his two successors — Sir Brian Mawhinney and Sir George Young. They called it railway privatisation.

"These rolling-stock companies were flogged off by the Tories for £1.8bn when they were worth £2.9bn. These are not my figures. They come from the normally cautious National Audit Office. The moment these companies were sold so cheaply, they became hot takeover bargains for the big boys in the private transport industry, who have snapped them up.

"THE Tories claimed that British Rail management was incompetent and could only be reformed by the 'discipline of private enterprise. But who are the main beneficiaries of their Great Train Robbery? Why, the very managers the Tories berated for their incompetence. For instance, one of the leasing companies, Porterbrook, was bought by its old British Rail managers for £300,000, and sold a few months later to Stagcoach for £23.7m. A director called Sandy Anderson made a personal profit of £33m.

"Another team of railway bureaucrats bought Eversholt for £400,000 and sold it for £57.2m. Nomura, some of whose ultimate bosses in Japan have recently been arrested for alleged racketeering, made a profit of £330m on buying and selling the third rail leasing company, Angel. The 'discipline of private enterprise' has led to the most reckless profiteering imaginable.

"Now the same thing is happening in the railway operating companies. Great Western Railways has an utterly appalling record. Their trains are body-shattered and run late more often than almost anywhere else. They have just been fined £30,000 for polluting a river near Plymouth. The directors of this disaster have

the barefaced cheek to seek to flog their company off at a fantastic profit. The chief executive will get £3.7m for his shares — 100 times what he paid for them! A former director-general of the rightwing Institute of Directors, who was a part-time non-executive director of Great Western, will pick up £750,000!

"Perhaps you shrug your shoulders and say — well, it is like winning the lottery. But lottery winnings come from people who have willingly paid into it. These disgusting rail profits come from the British taxpayer, who was never even asked to agree to them; and from our poor, underfunded railways which are still as heavily subsidised by the taxpayer as ever they were under public ownership. As for the Tory shillboleth about 'increased competition', the new private railway companies are all monopoly providers. As they are snapped up by private transport monopolies, all British transport by bus or train will increasingly fall prey to a private duopoly far more remote and unaccountable than a nationalised industry could ever be.

"Labour campaigned vigorously against rail privatisation, against fat cats, against sleaze. We have had enough of all three. I am this week introducing a short bill into the House of Commons which will block all future sales of railway companies at least until the companies offer their shares back to my department for the price they paid for them. There is an excellent

No more profiteering. No more millionaires on our railway

precedent for such emergency legislation. In 1964, immediately after Labour took office, Dick Cresswell introduced through Parliament a short bill protecting tenants from eviction. He was out to stop the racketeer landlords, just as we are out to stop the railway racketeers. I can also announce that the cabinet has decided to impose a windfall tax on the beneficiaries of the sale of the three leasing companies. I pledge finally to root out the senior officials in the Department of Transport responsible for this scandal, and replace them with genuine public servants. The message is plain. There will be no more profiteering; no more new millionaires on our railway, which we intend as soon as possible to make publicly owned and publicly accountable, as we promised."

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Sean Connery could accidentally help give Scotland a Lib-Lab coalition

What a turn-up

Peter Hetherington

THE visitor arriving in Edinburgh from another continent could be forgiven for thinking that all the immense constitutional progress currently being made in Scotland was entirely of the Scottish National Party's making. While Labour dithers, the SNP have cheekily assumed the mantle of the party of the emerging Scottish parliament.

The closet (and not so closet) republicans — officially, the SNP wants an independent Scotland to become a member of the Commonwealth — have even managed to gain a little political capital from the Government's apparent backtracking over whether a one-time Edinburgh milkman and tax-exiled superstar should get a knight-

hood. Sean Connery, former Tory-turned-SNP-supporter, was most disappointed to learn that the honour was not to be forthcoming (although he wasn't supposed to know anyway). Quite disgraceful, says a straight-faced SNP. And poor Donald Dewar, Labour's Scottish Secretary, is placed on the defensive.

Scots might never have been approaching this historical moment but for a Labour government fulfilling its long-held commitment to deliver on devolution.

The message has become lost along the way, partly because of the SNP's tactical amnesia. This, after all, was the party that throughout the 80s rejected all talk of home rule consensus. Then it would have no truck with a "toytown parliament".

Now, from the old mining county of Ayrshire to the dismal suburbs of Glasgow,

voters have been turning, yet again, to the Scottish nationalists in local council byelections.

It's a familiar pattern in a country which last September voted overwhelmingly in favour of the SNP, thus thronically for the return of a parliament after almost 300 years. The old

The timing of the first election could not be worse for Labour

enemies — Labour and the Scottish National Party — came together against all expectations in a brief, cross-party alliance to push the case for limited home rule, although for very different reasons.

While the latter saw the parliament as a means of

pushing for the ultimate break with Britain and achieving independence, the former thought its package of political devolution would at least help to lance a long-running nationalist boil and keep Britain united.

With Labour triumphant after delivering a key manifesto pledge — and, more importantly, with Tony Blair's insistence on a referendum amply vindicated — the SNP clearly had much ground to make up.

In its wildest moments, it could not have imagined that the task would have been so relatively easy. Bungled investigations into municipal cronyism, and sleaze in Glasgow and Renfrewshire, by the Labour machine in London over the past few months, have not helped the cause of the fireless Donald Dewar, who has been championing political devolution for most of his political life. A series of

rank-and-file rebellions at Labour's Scottish conference in Perth last weekend, over Trident, benefits to lone parents, and student fees, have handed opponents some welcome ammunition, to the alarm of the leadership. With elections to that Scots parliament just over a year away, some

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The gray
rains

Boss Zhu takes over

But rights still matter

WHERE IS China heading? The National People's Congress (NPC) in Beijing focuses attention on the world's biggest question — and the hardest one to answer. The new premier Zhu Rongji will offer an economic New Deal in the face of an unemployment threat as serious as that of the pre-war depression. Mr Zhu has solved one crisis — the inflationary surge of 1993. He takes over with the reputation of being a real Boss who can make the bureaucracy budge. If he gets it right, the outside world will have a sigh of relief — except for those who believe that "getting it right" should include real improvements in China's human rights. But the result of getting it wrong, everyone agrees, could dwarf all current difficulties in Asia and even past Soviet upheavals.

The shape of Mr Zhu's economic package is already clear as the NPC goes into its second week. China plans to spend a trillion US dollars in the next three years on infrastructure projects: these should both loosen regional blockages and create new jobs. Over the weekend Beijing leaders have been candid about the unemployment problem. On top of the 11.5 million state workers laid off last year, another 3.5 millions will be cut. This does not include millions of other urban dwellers and tens of millions in the countryside. Outgoing premier Li Peng has also announced plans to make four million cadres redundant — though that still leaves another 20 million or so. The reform of loss-making state enterprises is supposed to take place over

three years: ideally between one-third to one-half of their workers should be laid off. Mr Zhu is unlikely to push this through rigorously: he knows that job losses are already leading to social unrest. Western experts who snap at Mr Zhu's heels to sack more people and pump even more money into the domestic economy are giving bad advice which could lead to "stagflation" and devaluation: on running China's economy, the Boss may know best.

For both sides, China's economic problems — and possibilities — have long provided a rationale for playing down human rights. The agenda is beginning to shift: yesterday a China Daily commentary did not deny the right of foreign countries to express their concern: it argued instead that this should be achieved by dialogue — as the British-led EU is proposing to do, rather than by "confrontation" — as it accuses the US of doing. This is an illusory difference because all governments put strategic and economic relations with China ahead of human rights. Bill Clinton will be visiting Beijing as readily as Tony Blair. The only difference is that US public and congressional opinion demands more lip service paid to moral issues. It is not a question of isolating China, but of striking the right balance: the real danger in recent times has been appeasement.

Robin Cook believes that dialogue — or "engagement" — is beginning to pay off. But it only produces tiny dividends such as yesterday's news, garnered by the Austrian Vice-President in Lhasa, that the boy Panchen Lama (recognised by the Dalai Lama and denounced by Beijing) is living in a remote Tibetan village. Last November's release of the dissident Wei Jingsheng was a bigger step. Mr Cook meets him tomorrow, tactfully after rather than before the foreign secretary's recent visit to Beijing.

But the real human rights issues concern thousands of Chinese, unknown except to Amnesty, whose voices are stifled.

Mr Zhu has clean hands from the past — unlike others still in the leadership. Other younger, more open-minded, Chinese officials, managers and intellectuals are waiting their turn who may eventually take China further forward. But easing the pressure helps the Party diehards, not them. There is nothing wrong with dialogue — but it must not muffle criticism either.

Wizard of Oz

Israel's laureate deserves prize

ISRAEL does not have a poet laureate but, if it did, it would almost certainly be Amos Oz. For three decades he has been that country's foremost man of letters, writing brooding, complex novels — which nevertheless sell in Jeffrey Archer numbers: one book shifted 10,000 copies on the first day of publication. But Oz is more than Israel's leading novelist. He is also the intellectual inspiration of the country's peace movement, an early champion of Palestinian rights and a defiant spokesman of clear-eyed secularism. The decision to award him this year's prestigious Israel Prize was a recognition of that contribution — but also a victory for the sane, humane brand of Zionism he has come to personify.

Now the bot-heads of the Israeli right want Oz to be denied his reward. They say his 1989 description of West Bank settlers as a "cruel Messianic cult" and a "Jewish Hizbollah" puts him beyond the pale. Hard-liners say they will fight all the way to Israel's supreme court to change the decision. "Moderates" say he should only be honoured if he apologises first.

Of course, he must do nothing of the sort. His last name means courage, or strength — and he needs to draw on those qualities now. He also needs the backing of his many friends and admirers around the world. For Oz has long been the literary West's favourite Israeli, a representative of the Jewish state as it might have been: strong, fiery and eminently civilized. While his countrymen grow dizzy with dreams of a Greater Israel, he warned them of the dangers of squatting on another people's land. Zionism, he said, was a movement to liberate people, not turf. With his gift for political metaphor, he said Jews and Arabs were like a married couple who had proved they could no longer live together: they should divorce, with a "just and fair separation of assets." His explanation of Israel's right to exist was equally simple. The Jewish claim on Palestine was that of the drowning man clasping a piece of wood: he had a right to grasp it, even if that meant asking another man to share — but he could not grab the whole thing for himself. On that logic, Oz was one of the first advocates of the two-state solution which today remains the region's best hope for peace. In this, Israel's 50th year, Amos Oz deserves his prize: his wisdom is needed now more than ever.

Winner takes 2nd

FIA must reform or move over

IF A jockey "pulls" a mount during a race in order to allow another horse from the same stable to win, it is rightly regarded as a major offence with very serious consequences. When the same happens in Formula One — as it did over the weekend when David Coulthard pulled over with two laps to go to allow his team mate, Mika

Häkkinen, to win the Australian Grand Prix — it is seen by the authorities as hardly worthy of comment. When the race organisers complained yesterday to FIA, a spokesman for motor racing's so-called governing body said it would be wrong to sanction the McLaren team because the practice was so well established. The blandness of the FIA response will surprise no one who has followed its recent history.

Instead of being a watchdog, the FIA acts like a pussy cat without teeth. Last year when Michael Schumacher was found guilty of deliberately ramming a car being driven at very high speed by his rival Jacques Villeneuve — an act with potentially horrendous consequences — it merely stripped him of his place and sentenced him to the FIA's equivalent of a hard boot camp participation in an FIA road safety campaign. That'll teach him. Former world champion John Surtees was right yesterday when he called for motor racing chiefs to dock points from teams who manipulate Grand Prix finishes.

They have to make up their minds whether it is a competitive race or merely a hi-tech fashion show (in which case teams can do what they like). If it is the former then they must restore the concept of a competitive race. If teams can decide who should win or who should come second then all betting should be banned. Punters who bet on David Coulthard winning will rightly feel outraged. If there are any private deals within, or between, teams then they should be published in the race programme in advance so spectators and punters know exactly what it is they are watching. Grand Prix racing is a huge — British — success story but it won't be taken seriously as a sport until the FIA cleans up its act or, better still, hands over its judicial power to an independent body.

Letters to the Editor

The arcane and the able

SO the union flag will now fly over Buckingham Palace during the Queen's absence; future generations of Royals may be denied the opportunity of using the title HRH; and we will be spared the embarrassment of bowing or curtsying if we come into contact with these people (Palace revolution on cards, March 7). And you call that a revolution? David Northmore, London.

SEE you do not know the difference between an evangelist and an evangelical (Liberal bishop blocked, March 7). A gay man could soon tell you, in their own terms, an evangelist would seek his conversion. An evangelical would be preoccupied with his perversion. To call one the other is to call darkness light. Rev Dr John Stacey, Woodford Green, Essex.

IAN Aitken suggested that the Drones Club did not have a tie (Women keep out, February 28). In fact, in the last but one chapter of the final Jeeves and Bertie novel, Aunts Aren't Gentlemen, it was described as "a rich purple. There was talk at one time of having it crimson with white spots, but the supporters of that view were outvoted." Tony Ring, Editor, Wooster Sauce, Gt. Missenden, Bucks.

WHAT do women want? To get out of poverty, maybe: the 1.3 billion poor people in the world 70 per cent are women. Let's mark International Women's Day (March 8) by working towards eliminating female poverty. Dr Frederick Mulder, London.

Crazed killers and crazier policies

THANKS are due to Ray Rowden (Fear of killers, March 9) for highlighting the dangerous trend in mental health policy making. The service users and their champions could indeed do with the understanding, and funding, that has previously been directed at the AIDS issue, but it is not likely to happen.

The problems appear to be, first, that it is the Cunnis-type killings which prompt media attention and government action and so, inevitably, public safety becomes the starting point from which we talk about mental health policy. The other more fundamental problem is less talked about: the absence of any such grouping as "the mentally ill." I would be no more linked to Christopher Cunnis because I'd been in a mental hospital, than I am to Trevor West because I recently put a new floor in my kitchen.

What most people with men-

tal health problems have in common is only the crude and often damaging effects of medical treatment, poor service planning, and the absence of a community that cares.

If you want to campaign for sound mental health policy, user and carer involvement in planning is a fine starting point. If you want to avoid killers the group to watch out for is "partners", not the mentally ill or Gloucester builders. Patrick Graham, Cardiff.

RAY Rowden's views about the future of mental health policy are a breath of fresh air in a debate dominated by misinformation and knee-jerk policy-making. A return to institutionalisation is unlikely to increase public safety but certain to increase the level of abuse that people with mental illness suffer.

If the Government wishes to make the public safer, then

more rights are needed for people with mental illness, not less. There needs to be the right to care, so that people can get the support they want but are often refused; there needs to be anti-discrimination legislation with real bite, so people can get jobs; there needs to be a right to high quality housing.

If the Government really believes that the answer to public safety is to lock people up who may pose a danger to the public then I suggest a statistically far more deserving group to imprison would be the anti-social and drink and drive. Nigel Rose, Schizophrenia Media Agency, Manchester.

THE large mental hospitals were always deprived of money for their patients, to the benefit of the physically ill. Resources were taken from the mental health budget whenever a new general hos-

pital was built or extended. There was never funding for a community programme. Institutionalisation was a combination of low-cost care and an accumulation of people in chronic illness who lacked internal direction and lacked an ability to engage with each other.

The illness has not gone from these people. They are now dependent on agency carers, less trained and inexperienced; or, on family care, excluded from the professional caring loop by respect for the "user's" individuality, and confidentiality. Authors prefer to deal with "users", ignoring the experience of "carers of", who live with the problems of caring for "users" week in and year round. Dependent people do not have the same rights as those who carry their burden.

Dr D H Yates, Wadebridge, Cornwall.

Hancock left his stamp on us

AS THE author of two books, Tony Hancock's work, I had hoped that, after 30 years, the fact that he was the greatest post-war British comedian was more important than his personal problems. Not, it appears, according to the Royal Mail (Why Hancock tribute failed stamp of approval, March 9).

So that precludes stamps commemorating Van Gogh, Edgar Allan Poe, Ernest Hemingway, Sylvia Plath, Tchekovskiy and Marilyn Monroe (suicides), and Gauguin, Schumann and Maxim Gorky (alcoholics/suicides)? Hancock, with Simpson and Galton, pioneered naturalistic situation comedy and paved the way for later shows such as Yes, Minister. Roger Wilmut, Surbiton.

TONY Hancock is in good company. On the 100th anniversary of his death, Robert Louis Stevenson, whose imagination permeates the 20th century and will continue to do so long into the 21st, was thought, for some unfathomable reason, to be unworthy of commemoration on a postage stamp. Alan Young, Aberdeen.

RALPH STEADMAN may be correct in his suspicion that the Royal Mail "did not want the Queen's head on a stamp with human tragedy on it" but surely a comedian who earned his place in the public's affection by dint of his talent and hard work is rather more deserving of his image appearing there than someone who achieved her high profile by accident of birth? Steve Green, Olton, Solihull.

Pulled a fast one

I AM appalled at the behaviour of the McLaren team in Sunday's Australian Grand Prix in fixing the result of the race (Driver pact hands Finn unreal victory, March 9). This destroys Formula One as a spectacle and is against the ethos of sport.

Some questions come to mind. What about people who bet on the result in good faith? What if this practice is extended to other sports? The horse in the lead after 50 yards of the race wins? The first goal wins the football match? The first ball potted wins the snooker frame? The possibilities are endless.

I also think the ITV commentary team should have challenged Ron Dennis and his drivers about the tactics



used. Instead they went all out to ensure the post-race press conference was not shown live, and had obviously been edited — what didn't they want us to hear?

ITV need to get some challenge and bite into their coverage, or they should give it back to the BBC. Dave Murray, Greenford, Middx.

ANY pretence that Formula One motor racing is a sport disappeared into a cloud of smoke after the arranged conclusion to the Australian Grand Prix. The Labour Party must now rue the day that it ever got itself mixed up in this charade. Robert Jones, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk.

On our panel

YOUR articles yesterday on what women want (Mothers want right to stay with their children) and the Government's strategy towards women and families (A welfare state that works) were a welcome contrast to the simplistic view we hear so often now that all women want is a job and institutional childcare.

At the Family Policy Studies Centre, we have begun to feel increasingly out of step arguing for choice; that parents sometimes want to care for their own children; that going all out for new ways of funding/subsidising formal child care will cost a lot (no one can really say so much) and may not be cost effective. Ceridwen Roberts, Director, FPSC.

Eat our words.



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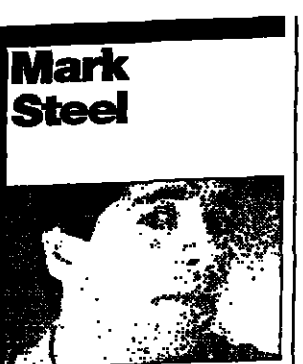
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He eats fried bread



WISE I could like John Prescott. His appearance is so un-New Labour that it makes no sense to accuse him of Tory-style scandals involving property dealers. He should be accused of working class scandals, like getting Glenda Jackson to clock in for him while he's up the bookies. Or wandering around his snooker club whispering: "Look at this. Three hundred quid a roll this costs in the shops. They had some hang-

ing round at work and, oh dear, some of it made its way into the back of my van. Twenty notes, it's yours."

Instead he's embroiled in the sort of allegations from which the defence is: "My family and I didn't discuss the matter". However innocent Prescott is, it seems peculiar that his son, who lives at the family home, could be involved in buying 20 houses and not mention it. Surely Mrs Prescott knew the way mothers do. Wasn't there a conversation that went:

"Where have you been?"

"Out."

"Out where?"

"Just out."

"You've been out buying 20 houses, that's where you've been. I can tell from the look on your face."

The other issue, of the unregistered donation, doesn't count because it comes from the Tories. "There is a traditional way to clear these things up," said Norman Fowler. Presumably he wants

Prescott to copy the Tory tradition, which would mean getting the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust to invest in dodgy shares in Cyprus, grabbing another £270,000 off them, hiding it until the company goes bust, giving a watch to the chairman, finally getting caught, saying "Oops" and never returning a penny.

Prescott's strength is that you could imagine having a pint with him, whereas a drink with any of his colleagues is unimaginable. They'd fidget, mumble about public borrowing, tell you how they had their kitchen and living room knocked into one, say: "My word it's ten past eight", and scurry off clutching some folders.

Prescott, you think, say: "After this we'll go down the Sainsbury's to do a lock-in. I've only got a cabinet meeting in the morning. I can miss that."

Which is why it's important to remind yourself that Prescott's role is to be Blair with a

northern accent. It's just that the message is somehow more disarming as "Ee, I tell thee what lad, thou's got to 'ave cuts or else thou's not being prudent".

This is how he persuades the left to vote with the right at Labour conference, with speeches that amount to: "Some folk say this motion is anti-union. Well, how can it be? I support it and I eat fried bread."

In this respect, like Fowler, he's respecting tradition. When a Labour leader is on a roll: "There's nothing you can tell me about strikes, I was in the front row at the Peasants' revolt you know," it's certain that he's about to finish with "That's why I say the only way to win this campaign is to call it off."

Prescott stands out in New Labour because he did lead strikes, and clearly resents Blair and Mandelson's manner. But then he defends everything they do. In last week's reply to Roy Hatters-

ley in this paper, he denied that the Government had made concessions to the Countryside Alliance. Yet the Cabinet sent someone on the march. Which is as much of a concession as if Prescott tipped a jug of water over his own head to prove that he really does understand the ways of Chumbawamba.

Throughout the article he claims that New Labour is doing a fine job of standing up to big business. So there are two possible explanations. One is that the rest of the Cabinet hide from him what they're doing. Like something from Mission Impossible they make mock newspapers, prepare to pretend they're union leaders and say to them "Of course we'll fulfil our promises on union recognition", leaving Prescott bemused as to why anyone's disappointed.

Or, when he writes about the radical achievements of New Labour, partly he's trying to convince himself. Like so

many Labour Party members, deep down he's troubled by the nonsense he defends but unable to see an alternative, he marches stoically forward, occasionally whispering an aside like: "That Mandelson's a toff". Which is why throughout Labour's record on the Gulf war, poll tax, Clause 4, benefit cuts and so on, he's scowled, huffed and grunted but never voiced a word of public opposition.

And when the white paper on union recognition arrives, it will be Prescott who is sent to tell the unions: "Ay, it's not bad is this. You've only to win backing of majority of directors and yer in."

And now that his son's becoming known as a property developer, Prescott must be afraid that one day he'll say to Prescott junior: "Where have you been?" "Out." "Out where?" "10 Downing Street if you must know. Weren't you invited?"

Parties and prisons

JACK Donaldson, who has died aged 90, was a deeply committed social reformer who made an immense contribution to public service in his long and varied life. Made a life peer in 1967, he served in the Labour government of the 1970s, latterly as Minister for the Arts.

Donaldson came from an upper-class background: his father was the Rev Stuart Donaldson, a distinguished master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, while his mother was Lady Albinia Donaldson, a daughter of the Earl of Buckinghamshire. He was educated at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took first-class honours in moral science and law.

On leaving Cambridge, Jack Donaldson worked between 1935 and 1938 for the pioneering Peckham Health Centre, which offered a range of badly-needed services in one of the most deprived areas of London. The centre, which closed with the onset of the second world war, made a lasting impact on thinking and policy about healthcare provision.

War service in the Royal Engineers reinforced Jack Donaldson's determination to work for a fairer society. It also brought him into contact with prominent members of future Labour governments, including Anthony Crosland and Denis Healey of whom Jack said: "He was the first officer I met who was far more intelligent than I was." Jack had married Frankie (the distinguished biographer

Frances Annesley Lonsdale) in 1935, and when the war was over, they settled at a farm in Gloucestershire. There are frequent references to the sociable Donaldsons in the diaries of his friend and Gloucestershire neighbour, Evelyn Waugh: a typical example, from June 1955, reads: "Donaldsons, Sunday. Much champagne drunk." The two men shared an interest in P.J. Wodehouse and claret. Frances Donaldson wrote that Waugh maintained "unbro-



ken affection for Jack because Jack is so difficult to offend. He is very amiable, very confident, and unshakably tolerant of small teasing."

It was after a move from Gloucestershire to another farm, in Buckinghamshire, that Jack first developed an interest in the penal system and, in particular, prisoners' reform. He became a member of the board of visitors at the nearby Grendon psychiatric prison (which he chaired from 1963-69), and, in 1961,

honorary secretary of the National Association of Discharged Prisoners' Aid Societies (Nadpas). In 1966, he became the first chairman of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (Nacro), founded in that year as the successor body to Nadpas.

Jack's determination, drive and enthusiasm were crucial to the successful development of the organisation. When it began, Nacro had eight staff. Under his chairmanship

ern Ireland, he was instrumental in introducing a conditional release scheme for prisoners in Northern Ireland to compensate for the lack of a parole scheme. He greatly enjoyed his time in office: every one in Northern Ireland liked him and he was affectionately known as the Minister of Parties.

In 1976, he was promoted to the post of Minister for the Arts. As described it at the time as "the only job I wanted, bar one, at the Home Office working for penal reform". Jack showed an impressive ability to rise above political infighting. His position also allowed him to indulge his great love of music in general and opera in particular — a love which had also involved his serving as a director of Covent Garden from 1968 to 1974, and of Sadler's Wells from 1963 to 1974.

After the 1979 election, Jack became an assiduous backbench peer. He joined the newly-formed Social Democrats in 1981, persuaded in particular by the views of his friend and former ministerial colleague, Shirley Williams, and in 1982, he was elected to the House of Lords. His commitment to penal reform continued as strongly as ever. In 1980, he became secretary of the all-party Penal Affairs Group, chaired by working group on life sentences, and in 1983, he produced an influential report in 1986, and was a frequent contributor to, and instigator of, debates on penal reform in the Lords. He encouraged

organisations concerned with the penal system to co-ordinate their lobbying work and, together with the late Baroness Sewart-Biggs, was a key influence behind the formation of the Penal Affairs Consortium in 1989 as a means of improving the impact of joint lobbying for penal reform.

Despite increasing physical frailty, he continued to turn out regularly to support Nacro. As recently as last November, he attended the organisation's annual general meeting to hear his chairman, Tony Christopher, pay fulsome and deserved tribute to his tireless dedication to Nacro and its work.

Jack's bearing was aristocratic and confident, yet, at the same time, affable and without a trace of condescension. In contrast to the effortless superiority of many from a similar background, his manner would be better described as "effortless equality". Jack Donaldson's ability and enjoyment of life was rooted in his family life. He had a happy childhood as one of three children, and he himself had three children, a son and two daughters.

Jack Donaldson's life combined an unusual blend of personal charm, an enjoyment of the pleasures of civilised life, a compassionate nature and a deep commitment to social reform.

Paul Cavasino

John George Stuart Donaldson (Lord Donaldson of Kingsbridge), born October 9, 1907; died March 8, 1998



Aitken... his work illuminated the Scots language and, by extension, the national culture

Professor Jack Aitken

The word in Scotland

FOR 30 years, Professor Jack Aitken, who has died aged 76, was editor of the *Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue (DOST)*. The ambitious aim of this dictionary is to provide a comprehensive source of reference for all words found in Scots texts, from Lowland Scots' beginnings in the 11th century to the 17th century, by which time social and cultural changes in Scotland had irrevocably altered its status and function.

Aitken, an Edinburgh man with a degree in English language and literature, worked as assistant editor of the *Dost* until 1956, when he succeeded William Craigie, its first editor. He held this post until his retirement in 1986, combining the work for much of this period with that of a lecturer in English language at Glasgow and Edinburgh universities, and later senior lecturer and reader at Edinburgh.

Under Aitken's direction, the project became even more ambitious. He initiated a new reading programme, greatly increasing the number of works consulted for the dictionary, and widening its geographical and topical range. This resulted in longer, more detailed and more systematically organised entries in the third and subsequent volumes of the dictionary compared to the first two. With the increased academic scope of the project came increasing financial burdens; and the dictionary, chronically under-funded, at times seemed on the point of collapse. It is to Aitken's wisdom as a scholar, and his dedication as a researcher, that we owe the stature of the dictionary among the great lexicographical projects of the world; it is to his untiring labour and dogged determination that it exists at all.

Aitken's work is seminal in the development of Scots linguistic studies as an academic subject. His many published articles and conference papers now form part of the bedrock knowledge on which the subject rests, and much of the information regularly reprinted in standard works in the field came from his lecture notes and handouts.

He resigned from his lectureship in 1979, leaving as his legacy a whole generation of Scots language students who owed their interest in, and knowledge of, the subject to his inspired teaching. He was a kindly and humorous man with which his erudition was always displayed as much as an ingrained humility among those who encountered it as is the fascination of his subject. From then until his retirement, he devoted his energy to lexicography.

initiative. Aitken did not live to see the completion of the project to which he had devoted most of his life's efforts, but the *Dost* is progressing as planned and will be complete by 2000.

Aitken's retirement in 1986 was purely nominal. Articles, conference papers and lectures, besides willing and valuable service on committees, came at a rate bordering on the incredible; even a serious illness requiring open-heart surgery only temporarily slowed the pace of his contributions to Scots studies.

Whether advising a musical group on the pronunciation of 16th-century Scots song texts, or discovering Scots influence in the letters of James IV's English queen, Aitken's unparalleled knowledge and boundless enthusiasm served to illuminate the Scots language, and by extension the whole national culture, for both specialists and laity. Fittingly, the project on which he was working at the time of his death was a memorial volume for his only compere among Scots language scholars, David Murray.

The scope and quality of Jack Aitken's work, in a field which he virtually created, places both philology and lexicography under an obligation never to be discharged. In a Scotland where a renewed interest in the mother tongue is growing, his influence will be deep and enduring.

J Derrick McGuire

Adam John (Jack) Aitken, philologist and lexicographer, born June 19, 1921; died February 11, 1998

Walter Easey

May the force be with you

FOR 10 years, Walter Easey, who has died aged 56, was a Hong Kong plain-clothes policeman in the anti-corruption branch, rising to the rank of inspector. Yet, by the 1970s, he had become a revolutionary and political campaigner against corruption in the colony. In working, with unswerving commitment, through his ill-funded Hong Kong research project.

Born and educated in Canterbury, Easey left Keele University before taking his degree to join the Hong Kong police. But, after his decade there and a spell as a private detective in Toronto, he returned to London. There he studied Chinese history and literature at the School of Oriental and African Studies, where his close friend and mentor became Malcolm Caldwell, the lecturer whose influence helped to transform Easey's anti-authoritarianism — and love of ordinary people — into a fierce and angry communism.

To support himself and his

project, he worked as a barman at SOAS, which he ran as a kind of multi-racial, East End local. There Walter, all six-foot-plus of him, presided over a woman anthropologist-cum-fiddle player and myself as we taught Irish dancing to Vietnamese, Indian and Arab students. In the SOAS basement, he used his *tae kwon-do* black belt to teach self-defence, and, as a reliable left-wing heavy, he acted as bodyguard to the CIA defector, Philip Agee, in the 1970s.

WALTER had become an authority on the London triads of the 1980s, but, by that decade — as funding for Hong Kong research dried up — he changed career again and began police liaison work. He joined the Greater London Council and local authority police committees, pressing for an increase in police accountability. Working with the Metropolitan Police, he was critical of much police practice, and loathed what he

saw of corruption and racism in its ranks. Yet he could also be a fierce defender of the force, especially its rank and file whom he saw as ill-led and often betrayed by their superiors.

Through all this, Walter Easey was an intensely local man, working in Elephant and Castle community politics. In the liberty-hall atmosphere of the Henshaw Arms, he argued for tenants' associations, street committees — and parties. He fought causes popular and unpopular, he was, for example, a vocal supporter of Peter Tatchell's bid to win the Bermondsey Labour candidacy.

Walter's first marriage, in Canada, was to the architect Phyllis Chia. From 1976 to 1984, he lived with Anna Davis, and they had a daughter, Sally, to whom he was devoted. In 1987, he married Ellen Jordan, a teacher, artist and educationalist whose political commitment and infectious humour matched his own.

He was not always easy to be with, and in anger against injustice might dismiss those less politically intense than himself. Yet he was the greatest of friends to those he loved and trusted, open-handed and generous. An exceptionally fine cook, he loved a good song and a pint of beer.

Alan Hawkins

Walter Easey, campaigner, born October 11, 1941; died February 23, 1998

Birthdays

Prince Edward, 34; Kim Campbell, former prime minister of Canada, 51; Sir Paul Condon, commissioner, Metropolitan Police, 51; Garth Crooks, footballer, broadcaster, 40; Lady (Marcia) Falkender, 68; Barry Gardiner, Labour MP, 41; Gen Sir



Easey... anti-authoritarian

James Smeall, who has died aged 90, rebuilt St Luke's College, Exeter, from the rubble of a 1942 air raid, and transformed a local academy into a centre of excellence. Smeall took over the college in 1943 having been head of Chesterfield Grammar School for four years. At Queen's College, Cambridge, he had switched from English to archaeology and anthropology. He then moved into teaching. Within five years of Smeall's arrival at St Luke's, the buildings were restored and new ones were being added. By 1947, it was the largest of the Church training colleges. The old rule-book was torn up for returning servicemen, and the college developed a uniquely liberal atmosphere.

Smeall maintained that he knew nothing about education and could be scathing about the idea of it being a subject. But it was axiomatic to him that those who were going to educate had to be highly educated. He also knew that community and quality went hand in hand and that communities needed symbols. He revived rugby at the college and, by the mid-1960s, the annual fixture with Loughborough became a key training colleges' event. At his retirement in 1972, St Luke's had nearly 1,400 undergraduates; in 1979, it became part of Exeter University.

In 1982, Smeall's book on satire, *Parody and Burlesque* was published. Generous and caring, he himself had a sardonic wit, with parsons and politicians his prime targets. As mayor in 1966, he pricked the noses of the bourgeoisie — and the town loved him. In retirement, he nursed his wife, Rae, until her death in 1984 and then lived life again to the full. He leaves one daughter.

Jack Priestley

James Leashley Smeall, college principal, born June 16, 1907; died February 24, 1998

Jackdaw

lita, the girl, rather than the book, has become part of our language, the name of a condition. But do we know what that condition is?

Michael Wood on Adrian Lyne's adaptation of *Lolita*, in *The New York Review of Books*.

Pi points

IT'S only the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter, but it does go on a bit further, in fact. This is because pi is an irrational number, which means it can't be expressed as a ratio, so the 3.141592 you may have learned at school is only a crude approximation. No matter how far you work it out, you will never reach a final answer. As tedious as it sounds, pi has worked out more and more places over the centuries. The world record of over 50 billion decimal places was accomplished after a super-computer had puffed away for days and days. But all these decimal places are completely, utterly useless. The six or seven built into most electronic calculators are accurate enough for just about everything in real life.

Loving Lolita

PEOPLE reading Nabokov's *Lolita* for the first time are often baffled by their own reaction. Those who haven't read it for a while approach it again nervously, as if afraid of what they will learn about their old attitudes or their old selves. It's not that the book, the story of the loves, travels, and undoing of Humbert Humbert and Dolores Haze, a middle-aged European man and a 12-year-old American girl, is funnier than we want it to be. Or that Humbert's tatty charm stretches much further than it has any right to. It's that we really don't know where we are: why we are laughing, what to do with our discomfort. There's also the sense that Lo-

Getting to grips with pi, from the newly-launched BBC Tomorrow's World.

Able fables

IN AEsop's day, concepts such as "love thy neighbour" were far-fetched and implausible: rich men begged their neighbours with scarcely a second thought. Sometimes, Aesop pillories them for reaching out a helping hand: these are cautionary tales, and generosity often appears as guile. If modern versions seek to replace this tough streak with a more jaunty and homespun worldview, we need not object too vigorously. At least we now have the sturdy original to hand.

Aesop: *The Complete Fables*, edited by Robert Temple, reviewed by Robert Winder in *The New Statesman*.

Jackdaw wants jewels. E-mail jackdaw@guardian.co.uk; fax 0171 715 5866; write Jackdaw, The Guardian, 115 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

Hannah Pool

A Country Diary

SOMERSET: On a section of the disused Somerset and Dorset Railway track, where it skirts the hillside at Cole, a surprising outcrop of brashly modern brick houses makes a strong case against piecemeal building development in green space. But the valley below holds its own. The stream is bordered with polished limes. The buildings are in local golden stone, and the 18th century manor has a watermill.

Beside the stream is a smallholding with free-range chickens, two pigs, and 73 goats. It began 11 years ago with three. Some are Golden Guernseys. A few of these, including one national champion, are classics — aristocrats with long, elegantly shaggy coats. Others have smooth coats, and their colour varies from creamy pale to deep red-brown. Like Channel Island cattle, Guernsey goats produce creamy milk. The herd must earn its keep as well as look beautiful and win prizes. Besides the Guernseys, there are plenty of British Toggenburgs. They

natures calling for a ban on hunting. That was correct. The caption, therefore, was wrong.

ON PAGE 4, G2, yesterday, we said Cherie Blair went to Seaford Convent Grammar School. We should have said Seaford.

THERE was an error in Crossword No 21,215, Page 24, March 6, which Buntborne, the setter, tried, unsuccessfully, to slip past Guardian readers. The solution to 3 down required Kaa to be Kipling's cobra. Kaa was a rock-

python. Kipling's cobras were Nag and his wife Nagaina.

A BYLINE on Page 16, March 7, located Joe Henley in Issy-les-Moulineux. The correct name is Issy-les-Moulineux.

CHRISTINE Davis, who appeared in the Birthdays column, Page 16, March 5, has now been President, Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland, since 1992. Among present responsibilities, she is chair of the Scottish Legal Aid Board. Apologies for any embarrassment.

It is the policy of the Guardian to correct errors as soon as possible. Readers may contact the office of the Readers' Editor, Ian Mays, by telephoning 0171 239 9589 between 11am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Fax: 0171 239 9897. E-mail: reader@guardian.co.uk

Death Notices

CHADWICK, Michael (1908-98), 7th March 1998, beloved husband of Joan, late of London, son of the late Alfred Chadwick and Gertrude Chadwick, died peacefully at home, 1200 Park Avenue, London, W11 1AA, on March 7, 1998. Burial at St. Paul's Church, London, W11 1AA, on March 10, 1998, at 2.30 pm. All are welcome but please apply for admission cards to St. Paul's, London, W11 1AA, on March 8, 1998, at 2.30 pm. Tel: 0171 715 5866. Donations to the Royal Children's Fund or the Marie Curie Centre.

Memorial Services

RUTHERFORD, Professor Andrew, CBE, a service of remembrance for the life and work of Professor Andrew Rutherford CBE, will be held on Monday 11 May 1998 at the University Church of Christ the King, Gordon Square, London WC1, at 2.30 pm. All are welcome but please apply for admission cards to St. Paul's, London, W11 1AA, on March 8, 1998, at 2.30 pm. Tel: 0171 715 5866. Donations to the Royal Children's Fund or the Marie Curie Centre.

Engagements

MITCHELL, Mike, and Jo Cross are delighted to announce their engagement. They will have their wedding reception at 11.15 am on Saturday 14 March 1998 at 11.15 am. Tel: 0171 715 5866. Donations to the Royal Children's Fund or the Marie Curie Centre.

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Analysis Food labelling

When truth isn't part of the packet

Careful shoppers read the list of ingredients on their food packaging before shelling out – and under current law a fat lot of good it does them. What can be done, asks **Roger Cowe**

TONY Blair might have taken a close interest in the small-print listing the ingredients on his cereal packet this morning. He was urged to do so by 1.3 million people who signed a petition delivered to 10 Downing Street at the weekend.

The campaigners want the right to know what is in their cornflake packets – and all other processed foods. The signatures had been collected by Flag, a food labelling pressure group set up last year by food and health writers.

Spokeswoman Sarah Stacey says: "The food scandals of the last few years mean that the consumer no longer trusts the government or the food industry to tell the truth. It's vital that the basic right to know what is in the food we eat is covered by legislation."

This might come as a surprise to shoppers who study the boxes, cans and packets on the supermarket shelves before chucking them in the trolley. The dedicated investigator needs a magnifying glass for some product labels, but the figures are there. The law requires every pack to show the product ingredients, while many manufacturers and retailers go much further

by giving nutritional information – analysis according to key diet components such as energy, protein and fat.

Critics say they might as well not bother, however. They argue that the approach adopted varies so much that comparison is impossible, even across products from the same manufacturer. And the voluntary nature of most labelling means that manufacturers can, and do, hide less savoury facts.

For example, a frozen cod dish might have about as much acquaintance with a cod as the delivery driver has with the trawler which caught the whiting, haddock, hake or other varieties of ocean creatures also included in the product.

The trouble is that the regulations require very little that can be useful to consumers, even though they are steadily being tightened by European Union legislation.

The Food Safety Act is the basic law. It was passed in 1990 after a decade of food scares from BSE to ESE. But it was framed in a negative way. The Act prohibits misleading information, but does not require accurate labelling. Regulations have since come into force, following EU directives, which stipulate mini-

mum information on food packets. But this level is of little use if you want to know what is in your burgers or bran flakes.

Launching a campaign for labelling reform last autumn, the director of the Consumers Association, Sheila McKechin, observed: "What's on the outside doesn't necessarily reflect what's on the inside."

She dubbed the practice of some food manufacturers as "confusion marketing", based on research which discovered a wide variety of misinformation. Examples included "Mince and Onions" where chicken was the main meat ingredient (and that was mechanically separated chicken – the industry euphemism for the bits recovered from the carcass which you wouldn't normally give your cat).

Leading manufacturers and retailers were not exempt from Ms McKechin's scorn. She cited Heinz as one of many whose products included artificial sweeteners while proclaiming the absence of artificial colour, flavour or preservative. Boots for a banana cereal which contained more sugar than bananas; and low-fat Ovaltine which contained more fat

Behind the small print



Flavourings

Flavourings don't have to be listed by name and such additives as solvents and enzymes used as processing aids, but which may remain in the food, escape the listing process.

Hidden chemicals

Fruit and vegetables are not labelled, but there's a danger they contain pesticide and insecticide residues. There are fears that other chemical contaminants can come from plastic packaging.

Hidden health hazards

Processed foods contain unhealthy fat, sugar and salt, but the quantities may not be listed. Nutrition labelling is voluntary. Some manufacturers do not list nutritional information. When given it might be incomplete or difficult to decode.

Mostly sugar

"90% fat-free" really means with 10% fat – over the accepted guidelines for a low-fat claim. A packet that screams "Low Fat Food" might be low in fibre and high in sugar and salt (although it may not tell you so on the label). Mince and onions might contain mechanically-separated chicken. Fish fingers don't have state how much fish they contain. Some juice drinks have as little as 5-10% per cent juice. And words like "farmhouse", "wholesome", "traditional" and "natural" help to paint a rosy picture often assisted by misleading pictures on the packaging.

Chemical ingredients concealed

There is no law covering the labelling of genetically modified foods. Genetically modified cheese, soya and tomatoes are already on our supermarket shelves. It is up to the manufacturers to decide whether and how to label them.

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The mission to abolish flummery

suspicious of such ingredients, and retailers are increasingly keen to take their side against the manufacturers, who still resist the trend towards freedom of food information on the grounds of practicality – and a phobia about regulation.

Food firms have a point when they say it is impossible to analyse every chemical in every item, especially those which occur in nature. But they are under increasing pressure to reveal more about what is added.

The Institute for Grocery Distribution, the industry's trade body, has recently promoted a code on nutrition labelling, and the Government is expected to announce in the next few weeks how it will implement an EU directive requiring quantities of ingredients to be shown on labels.

But some big food firms are not prepared to wait. Last autumn the Co-op launched its own code of practice, which it proclaimed as a blow for openness in labelling.

The company promised to be more ethical in product descriptions and pack presentation, so that minced fish will not be described as "fillet" or "steak" and all varieties of meat will be identified, along with the percentage of meat content. The Co-op now lists the percentage content of all but minor ingredients, prominently displays fat content, and also includes daily nutrition guidelines.

That is all well and good, says Flag. But such voluntary initiatives are not enough. The campaign is demanding a package of government measures, which it hopes could be promoted by the Food Standards Agency, which is expected to be established next year.

It wants labels to identify: pesticides, through a "P" numbering system; genetically engineered ingredients;

meat varieties, and the method of slaughter; potentially allergic substances; additives, listed with their E numbers; salt, fat, sugar and fibre levels.

And Flag says that incorrect or meaningless health claims should be banned, while other claims must be supported by scientific research.

There is a head of steam behind such demands but much depends on the Food Standards Agency, and whether it will be given the remit – and the necessary resources – to ensure that ordinary shoppers can understand just what it is they are purchasing from the supermarket shelves.

Sources: (1) Under wraps – what lies behind the label: Consumers Association policy paper, Nov '97; (2) The lie of the label, report on labelling and code of practice, CWS, November 1997; (3) Why Food labelling matters – Flag manifesto, October '97. Graphics sources: What the label doesn't tell you, by Sue Dibb (Thompson, £5.95); The Food Commission; The Lie of the Label, Co-operative Welfare Society. Graphics: Graphic News; Steve Villiers. Research: Mark Esphar.

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FinanceGuardian

Halifax makes £780m play for Midlands

Rupert Jones and Liz Stuart

A BID battle neared last night after the Halifax announced a £780 million takeover offer for Birmingham Midshires building society. Royal Bank of Scotland insisted it would not bid more than the £630 million offer it has already made for the society.

Halifax said its proposal will offer "significantly more value" to the society's 1.1 million members. It could mean handouts averaging £750 - 25 per cent more than the £630 members would typically receive as part of the RBS deal, which was due to be voted on in June.

One analyst speculated that the Lloyds TSB group and Abbey National could also enter the fray as potential bidders in what is the first contested takeover of a building society, but said the business is probably too small to seriously interest either.

Halifax's counter-offer follows two days of intense speculation that Britain's largest mortgage lender would step in with a bid. It was announced in August last year that RBS was to pay to buy out the £600 million and £630 million for Midlands. The transfer document was due to be sent out to members next month and the deal was due for completion in early autumn.

Halifax said its bid - which, if agreed, would mean a mix of cash and preference shares being handed to members - values the business between 23.8 and 28.9 per cent higher than the RBS offer. It will be seeking the co-operation of the Midlands board to ensure the offer is put to the

society's members "as soon as is practicable".

"Our approach represents a substantially better deal for Birmingham Midshires' members and we look forward to working with Birmingham Midshires' board to deliver a successful outcome," said Halifax chairman Jon Foulds. "Birmingham Midshires is a quality business which would fit well within the Halifax group."

An RBS spokesman said last night: "We have no plans to increase the financial element of our deal."

The Midlands board would be giving the offer detailed consideration over the next few days, said the building society.

Halifax, which last week announced it is to buy back £1 billion of its shares, said it would keep the Birmingham Midshires brand for at least three years and indicated there should not be the need for compulsory redundancies. If the counter-offer is accepted, customers will have access to the wide range of products and services offered by Halifax, which is keen to increase its share of mortgage lending.

Asked about the timing of the move, David Gilchrist, Halifax's director of corporate affairs, said: "We had been watching the situation for some time. Press reports alerted us to the fact that maybe there was a view that the bid on the table was on the low side."

Halifax is not proposing to change the way in which windfalls would be distributed to members. "We have broadly indicated we would hope as far as possible to keep to the current timescale," said Mr Gilchrist.

B&B to snap up estate agency

Liz Stuart

BRADFORD & Bingley yesterday announced plans to buy the Black Horse estate agency more than a decade after other building societies stampeded, to disastrous effect, into the housing market.

B&B, which is likely to pay Lloyds TSB about £70 million for the 372-strong agency chain, said it hoped to avoid the mistakes of its rivals, who paid a fortune for agencies as the housing boom peaked only to bail out when they found themselves saddled with expensive branch networks as recession hit.

The buying frenzy of the 1990s created a new breed of property millionaire as banks and building societies outbid each other to buy up the large chains. They then overpaid for the scores of smaller independent agencies, which often owned only a few branches.

Nationwide Building Society sold its 304 estate agency branches for £1 three years ago to Hambro Countrywide.

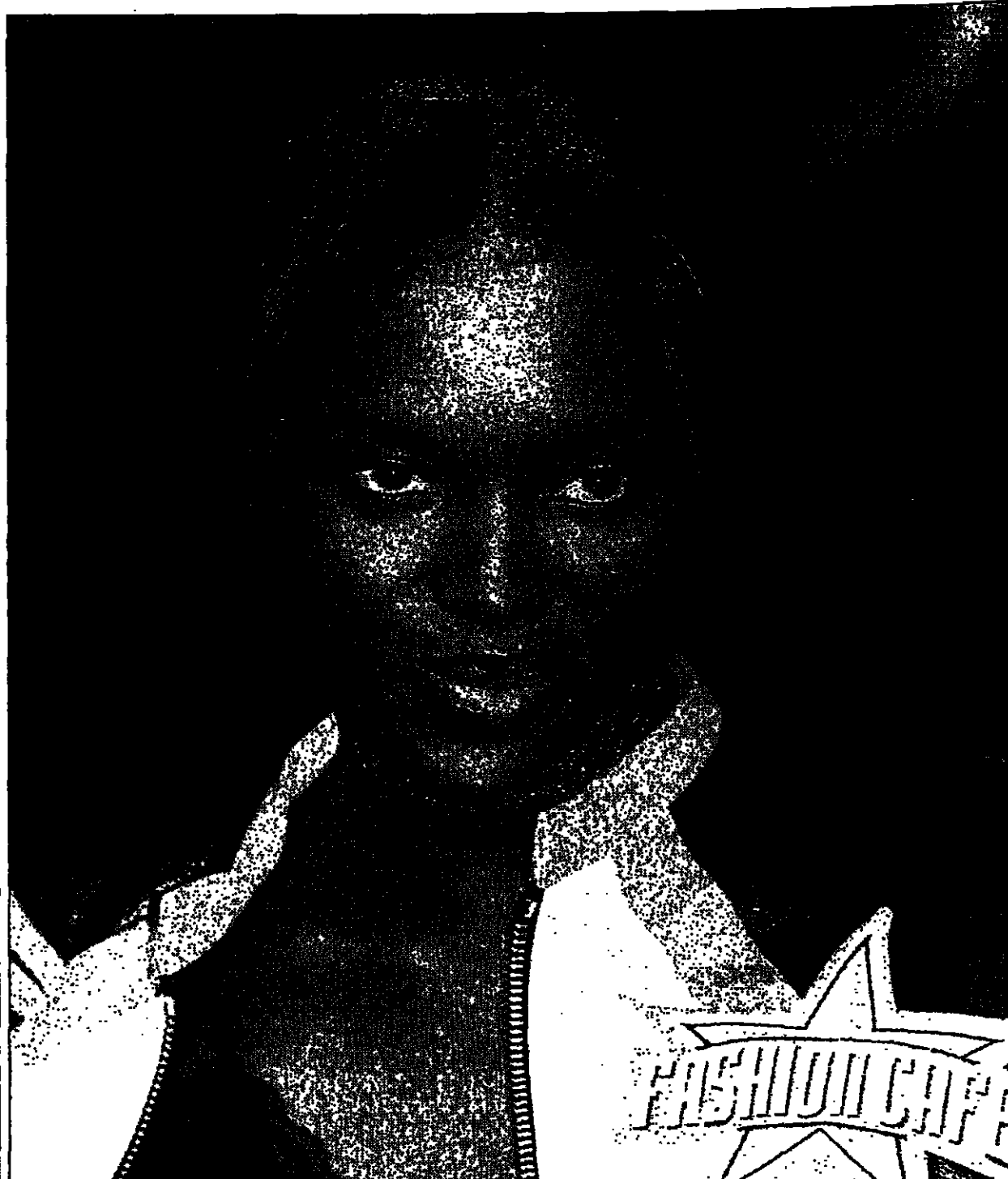
In the same year, Bristol & West sold Hampton, writing off more than £20 million in the process. In 1996 Alliance & Leicester sold off its agencies, having sustained losses of around £18 million.

A B&B spokesman said: "We are aware of the problems that estate agencies experienced in the late 1990s, but market conditions are completely different now. We will now be able to offer our members, and others, a complete housing service."

B&B is paying around £20 million for the net assets of the cluster of businesses trading under the Black Horse name, which include Gascoigne-Pees in Surrey and Hampshire, Stimpsons in Bedfordshire and Slater, Hogg & Howison, one of the largest chains in Scotland.

One analyst said the deal makes sense to both parties: "You can't argue with it. It's a good deal for both sides."

According to the BRC, the value of sales rose by 3.4 per cent in February, compared



Mexican clothing company Grupo Covarra yesterday announced plans to take a stake in theme restaurant chain Fashion Cafe, which

counts supermodels Naomi Campbell (pictured above), Elle Macpherson and Claudia Schiffer among its investors.

The chain's outlets include branches in London, Barcelona, New York and New Orleans. Funds from Paris and Dubai.

be used for expansion in Europe and the Far East, with new sites to include Paris and Dubai.

PHOTOGRAPH: RICHARD KENDAL

Late-train payout set to double

Keith Harper
Transport Editor

GROWING discontent among passengers has forced the 24 train operating companies to draw up plans to double the minimum compensation payments for late arrivals to £20, it emerged yesterday.

The enhanced payments for any train delayed by more than an hour represents the first changes to the compensation system since privatisation. They will be introduced as soon as possible after consultations with John Swift,

the rail regulator. Public confidence in Britain's rail service is at an all-time low. In the two years since privatisation, the companies have picked up all the baggage of resentment, dissatisfaction and mistrust that it took British Rail 50 years to collect.

Yesterday information was published showing that punctuality times for Great Western Trains, the company taken over last week by First Group, have slipped, with nearly a fifth of trains running late over the past month. The Association of Train Operating Companies,

which is to make the changes, still has to decide whether to ease current restrictions on how to claim compensation.

To be eligible at present, passengers must submit a claim within two working days of completing the journey. A valid ticket must also be presented. Discount vouchers can entitle passengers to a reduction in the cost of their next journey. In future, the value of the voucher could be as much as 20 per cent of the amount paid for the journey.

Among the companies involved in the scheme are Virgin, National Express, Connex and Stagecoach.

Together, they operate on more than two thirds of Britain's 11,000 miles of railway.

City analysts yesterday forecast that the merger last week of Great Western Trains and North West Trains would be only the first of several new industry link-ups. Chiltern Railways, owned by M40 Trains, a management and employee buy-out with 31, the venture capital group, along with Thames Trains, is said to be the next likely to be sold on. Other contenders are Prisma Rail, which owns four train companies, and GB Railways, owners of Anglia Railways.

Retailers bolster recession fear

Mark Atkinson
Economics Correspondent

FEARS that the economy is heading for a hard landing will be reinforced by the release today of a survey showing a sharp slowdown in retail spending last month.

On top of official data yesterday which showed manufacturing on the brink of recession, the British Retail Consortium's monthly sales monitor will increase speculation that the next move in interest rates may be down.

According to the BRC, the value of sales rose by 3.4 per cent in February, compared

with 6.1 per cent in January and 4.8 per cent in December.

Andrew Higgs, chairman of the BRC's economic affairs committee, said customers had taken fright at price rises after deep discounting in the January sales. "Many customers will have felt the impact of higher prices in the January round of annual reviews," he said. "This may have contributed to weaker sales of furniture and carpets."

The Office for National Statistics said yesterday that manufacturing output was unchanged in January compared with December and up by only 0.3 per cent on the year. Factory production fell

in the last three months of 1997 and, unless it stages an unexpected rebound in February and March, will have fallen for two quarters in a row, meeting the technical definition of recession.

Simon Briscoe of Nikko Europe said: "Manufacturing is only 20 per cent of the economy but, against the background of a slowing service sector, the danger is that the psychological effect of a severe recession in manufacturing could turn the expected soft landing for the economy into a hard one."

Separate ONS figures confirmed that inflationary pressures in industry are almost non-existent, with output

prices flat in February and up by 0.8 per cent in the year.

Input prices, the cost of raw materials and fuel, fell by 0.2 per cent in the month and were down 9.5 per cent from a year earlier. "The producer prices figures underline the plus side of the strong exchange rate," said Jonathan Lloyes of HSBC Greenwell.

Britain's inflation rate fell to a historic low of 1.5 per cent last year, according to Eurostat, the EU statistical service, writes Martin Walker in Brussels. This is lower than the official British inflation rate because Eurostat uses a measurement system which reduces the effect of Britain's variable-rate mortgages.

Few tears as City lunch tradition passes away

NOBEL Prize-winner

declared money spent on expense accounts as the second-least efficiently spent cash there is, ranking above only welfare payments, writes Dan Atkinson. Yesterday the professor's theory was verified after extensive research in the world's leading laboratory of expense-account lunches, the Square Mile.

Come 12.45pm in the City, says restaurant-group executive Michael Paterson, lunchers fall into two groups: those on expenses, and those not.

The difference? £15, roughly. The expense-account lunch averages £30 a head; transformed into an

own-account lunch, he halves that figure. The City's sub-class - secretaries, messengers, security guards - never gets to eat out on the firm. But, whether a temporarily-disposed expense nosher or a permanently-excluded own-account eater, the choice is limited.

Mr Paterson and his colleagues fear that - inside the City - there is a lack of places offering decent food for £15. But then, by his calculations, nine out of 10 lunchers on any working day are on expenses. Many of these will be munching their way through delicacies at the eateries of Oriental Restaurant Group, of which Mr Paterson is fi-

nance director. But Oriental, which owns the Sri Siam City, is opening two



new outlets - one on the

veritable Coates wine-bar site of Moorgate, the part of the 1 Bishopsgate site - to cater for those who, until now, have enjoyed pub, wine bar or a ride to cheaper venues.

The motive is not entirely philanthropic. The conversion of offices to flats in and around the City is bringing a new customer to the Square Mile, the resident. Mr Paterson thinks the growth of Square Mile living may mean within five years that some Oriental outlets will open at the weekends.

Value for money and convenient opening hours? The City's great traditions are passing away.

Notebook

Publishers pass up US challenge



Edited by Alex Brummer

THE touchy-feely era of the agreed takeover bid is starting to look slightly threadbare.

Within a matter of weeks three such multi-billion deals have fallen apart - Glaxo-Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham, the accounting merger between KPMG and Ernst & Young and now the get-together between Reed-Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer.

Of these three deals the publishing get-together always looked the most likely to survive. There has been no clash of egos and culture as there was between Glaxo and SKB nor were the regulatory problems likely to be insurmountable as they proved in the audit merger.

If companies are prepared to battle it out with the regulators, they normally come out on top as GrandMet-Guinness proved and as British Airways-American Airlines hope to demonstrate.

It was last Thursday that the first suggestions of a problem between Reed-Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer began to surface and were hastily denied in a stock market statement. On Friday all the parties submitted a 180-page dossier to the European Commission, explaining their response to regulatory objections.

Had the regulatory requirements been the only reason for calling off this deal, then it seems unlikely that the companies would have gone to the time and expense.

What really appears to have happened is that Wolters Kluwer has become increasingly disillusioned with the share split among three parties, agreed at the outset, in which it would become the smallest holder in the new company with 27.5 per cent.

Elsevier would hold 34.2 per cent and Reed International the strongest 38.3 per cent stake. Wolters became concerned that this was too much dilution of its financial interest and couldn't persuade its partners to change. End of a dream of a European publishing and information champion to take on the Americans.

Halifax swoop

IT IS not the first time the Halifax have come from nowhere to become the decisive influence in a takeover.

In the period before flotation it emerged as the surprise winner for Clerical Medical, just when it seemed that NatWest had clinched the deal. Now it is pulling the same trick.

Just as it seemed as if the Royal Bank of Scotland £630 million deal for the Birmingham Midshires was on course, along comes the Halifax with an offer of £780 million.

Liffe on line for electronic age

Mark Milner
Deputy Financial Editor

LONDON'S derivatives market, Liffe, yesterday signalled a radical change of policy when it announced plans to run electronic trading alongside its current floor-based "open outcry" system.

If members endorse the 25 million it could have a significant effect on the exchange's complex mutual ownership structure, under which the most valuable shares are worth up to £150,000 each.

Liffe products have been traded traditionally by dealers in brightly-coloured jackets operating face to face across trading "pits". Under pressure from competing ex-

The Halifax clearly believes that its mortgage book and income stream is a useful way of spending the capital and given the higher earnings multiples being carried by quoted mortgage and regular banks, even a price of £780 million does not look expensive.

However, the Halifax deal is not without its problems. The Birmingham Midshires branch network is likely to survive for the time being, while the Halifax brings the customer base onto its own information systems, but in most cases it is likely to find the branches too small for the range of services.

Within three years the Birmingham Midshires, like the Leeds, could be a distant memory as the Halifax seeks to bring Midlands' high cost-income ratio down to its own.

The good news is that Halifax chief executive Mike Blackburn is not squandering the group's cash on business. It knows little about. The flip side, however, is that a group which is already seen as over-dependent on the vicissitudes of the housing market, will be even more so after this deal.

Indeed, with a combined market share of at least 17 per cent, there may even be some competition issues to address. With other groups like Lloyds TSB in the wings, this battle may not be over yet.

Liffe's U-turn

LIFFE is clearly feeling the sharp spur of competition. Nothing else can explain its change of heart over electronic trading. It is not that long ago that the exchange looked askance at the idea.

Liffe executives will argue, reasonably enough, that the exchange is not planning to abandon open outcry trading. But then the Stock Exchange did not plan to abandon its trading floor either, post Big Bang.

True, Liffe offers a narrower range of products with greater volumes and much higher liquidity but the fact remains that market practitioners may find it cheaper to have traders tied to in-house desks than spread across Liffe's trading floors.

Though the market will deliver its own decision there must be a concern that in the meantime, the exchange could find its energies divided between the two trading systems.

However, Liffe may have been in the past, it is clearly hoping that by adding electronic trading to its competitive armoury it will be able to bring in new players, steal a technological march on its European competitors - whose systems are older - and win back some of the business it has been losing.

Having left it late in the day, however, Liffe could find itself having to concentrate much of its energies on selling the changes to its complex membership structure, rather than managing the changes. "This at a time when the introduction of the single currency is intensifying those pressures which have provided the drive for the new proposals."

changes, such as Frankfurt's DTF and MATIF in Paris, it has been edging towards electronic trading.

However, yesterday's proposal to run electronic trading in all its important contracts alongside "open outcry" dealing from the fourth quarter of next year is a bigger change than Liffe has previously contemplated.

Widespread access through an electronic system will mean Liffe will have to look at its structure, through which only shareholders can hold permits to trade.

In a move which seems designed to help the Liffe board sell its wide-ranging proposals for change, it is planning to cut dealing fees by reducing expenditure by up to £40 million this year.

British Steel linked to Belgian bid round

Mark Milner

SHARES in Belgium's Cockerill Sambre soared yesterday as investors scented another round of rationalisation in the European steel industry.

Dutch group Hoogovens is local stock market favourite to launch an offer for Cockerill Sambre, but France's Usinor Sacilor and British Steel have been tipped as possible bidders.

cent holding in Cockerill Sambre. British Steel declined to comment on the speculation yesterday.

The pound's strength has increased pressure on British Steel to broaden its geographical base. It has invested more than £200 million in projects in the United States and, until the recent crisis, was looking at the Far East via an Indonesian joint venture.

British Steel's size, with a market capitalisation of £2.9 billion and net cash of £400 million, has made it the subject of several acquisition rumours, but the group has traditionally preferred to grow organically.

TOURIST RATES - BANK SELLS

Australia 2.39	Germany 2.92	Malaysia 4.466	Singapore 2.65
Austria 20.54	Greece 483.97	Malta 0.83	South Africa 7.94
Belgium 60.14	Hong Kong 12.31	Netherlands 2.2781	Spain 248.79
Canada 2.26	India 64.74	New Zealand 2.75	Sweden 12.9
Cyprus 0.85	Ireland 1.1746	Norway 12.15	Switzerland 2.38
Denmark 11.20	Israel 5.87	Portugal 238.60	Turkey 366.340
Finland 8.94	Italy 2.894	Saudi Arabia 6.03	USA 1.6016
France 9.77			

Supplied by NatWest (excluding rupee, shekel and indollar)

Football

Thompson in, Francis steps back

Ian Ross and Peter White

TREVOR FRANCIS, who walked out on Saturday, resumed his duties as manager of Birmingham City yesterday but Sheffield United, who had been widely expected to re-engage the departed Nigel Spackman, gave the job to Steve Thompson until the end of the season.

Spackman, who resigned last Monday, had indicated after the chairman Mike McDonald that he would be happy to return. Instead Thompson, a member of the coaching staff who stood in for Spackman last week and said he did not want the job, will stay in place to oversee United's push for promotion.

"You only get one chance on this earth and I don't think anyone would begrudge me taking that chance," said the 42-year-old backroom boss.

On Sunday Kevin McCabe, yesterday installed as acting chairman, said Spackman enjoyed good support from directors. But in a move that will do little to bridge the divide between supporters and directors, United opted for Thompson, a former United player and life-long supporter.

Thompson steered the Blades to a draw at Coventry in Saturday's FA Cup quarter-finals but unless promotion is achieved it is probable that Lou Macari will succeed him in the summer.

Francis, meanwhile, made it clear he would stand no further interference from Birmingham's commercial department, headed by the managing director Karen Brady. He returned less than 48 hours after resigning amid an angry exchange of words following the match at St Andrew on Saturday.

The 43-year-old former Birmingham player held Brady's commercial team responsible for the incident that led to his resignation. The unsavoury episode stemmed from Brady's decision to sell to corporate hospitality, for around £2,000, a lounge area normally reserved for players' wives.

Francis said: "The players were angry when they heard that their wives were being moved. I would have been letting them down if I had not taken this stance."

Francis and Brady have rarely seen eye to eye and although the club chairman David Gold must accept that there is only an uneasy calm within the club, he is delighted that Francis is back.



Pass master... Rangers' Alex Cleland evades David Rogers to cross the ball beyond Jim McNally

ALAN HARVEY

Scottish Cup quarter-final: Rangers 0 Dundee 0

Rangers fire only blanks

Patrick Glenn

RANGERS supporters sloped out of Ibrox early last night, convinced that their tolling team would not overcome the runaway leaders of the First Division. They proved sound judges and the sides will meet again next week.

Nobody in the big crowd had expected anything other than a bombardment of the Dundee penalty area. But the Rangers big guns, as with

most artillery fire, lacked subtlety and generally failed to do the damage the home support had anticipated.

As Dundee reached the interval unscathed the cheers of their small band of fans was overwhelmed by roars of disapproval from the Rangers crowd, upset by the lack of conviction and authority that marked the scoring attempts of the home side.

Jörg Albertz was an exception to this broad truth. The German, whose recent goals have saved Rangers precious

league points, produced the most menacing moment of the first half with a thundering left-foot drive from 30 yards which bounced off the goalkeeper Robert Douglas's chest and back into play.

Albertz had also delivered the pass from which Marco Negri had earlier hit the bar. The ball, lobbed from the half-way line, dropped teasingly over Brian Irvine and the Italian striker fired in a venomous volley from 16 yards.

Those moments apart there was a dearth of self-belief about the home players when in good positions. Jonathan Johansson — supplied by Albertz — had a clear look at Douglas but from 12 yards mislaid the ball tame into the goalkeeper's arms. Jonas Thern did little better, his low drive lacking pace and direction.

If anything Rangers were worse after the interval and Dundee began to niggle at them while rarely threatened. Andy Goram. For much of the time the visitors were comfortable in their containment of the odds-on favourites and when they were exposed, as when Albertz's precise centre from the left found Johansson only six yards from goal, the Rangers players could usually be relied upon to screw up. This time the Finn headed high over.

Johansson had earlier been given an opportunity by McColl, who slid his pass into the area on the right. Johansson clipped a shot on the run that was safely held by Douglas.

During the moments when Dundee looked promising Thern was cautioned for a deliberate check on Daruss Adamson. More seriously, the Swede was later helped off with what appeared to be a bad injury and replaced by Seb Rosenthal.

Martin Thorpe

TERRY VENABLES is understood to be considering an approach to coach Real Madrid. This is one of the reasons he has delayed giving an answer about becoming the Crystal Palace manager.

The former England coach yesterday promised the Palace director Mark Goldberg that he will give him his decision today. If Venable says yes his first signing may be Paul Gascoigne, who played successfully under him at Tottenham and for England.

Although Palace v Real Madrid would seem no contest, it is believed that Venable is uncertain whether he wants to work outside England again. Also, Real Madrid's approach is understood to be informal and he needs to investigate it further. But Real's current coach Jupp Heynckes has not been a success and Venable would seem a natural target for the club, having coached

their arch-rivals Barcelona to the league title in 1995.

Venable was in Spain last week and returned there yesterday after a morning meeting in London with Goldberg, who has completed the first stage in a proposed £30 million takeover of Palace.

Venable, who first met Goldberg last Monday, has been offered a five-year contract, with his basic salary topped up by performance bonuses and share options.

"Terry and I had another good meeting," said Goldberg. "I felt that we cleared up a lot of issues. Terry has to consider his involvement as coach of the Australian national team as well as his interests outside football."

"I am sure that if I had another couple of meetings with Terry then he would come on board. But he has not said no. I remain hopeful."

If Venable does come on board, the current manager Steve Coppell will step aside to a new role of director of football development.

Wolves 'at home' for semi-final

WOLVES have been given virtually home advantage at Villa Park — some 12 miles away from Molineux — for their FA Cup semi-final against either Arsenal or West Ham on Sunday, April 5.

The Premier Division side's noonday challenge to the London Premiership oppo-

sition will be shown live on ITV, with any replay at the same venue.

The other semi-final, with Newcastle taking on Coventry or Sheffield United, will kick off three hours later at Old Trafford. It will be shown live on Sky and any replay will also be at Manchester.

Athletics

Mayock pulls out of teams event to pursue solo glory

Duncan Mackay

JOHN MAYOCK, Britain's newly-crowned European indoor 3,000 metres champion, has withdrawn from the team for the World Cross-Country Championships in Marrakech next week because he wants to concentrate on preparing for the summer track season.

The Yorkshire runner made the decision not to compete in the four-kilometre race in Morocco despite another fine victory in Sindelfingen, Germany, on Sunday, when he won the 3,000m in 7min 50.10sec from a field containing several top Kenyans.

It means Mayock has given up the opportunity to emulate Scotland's Ian Stewart, who in 1975 took the World Cross-Country title eight days after winning the European indoor 3,000m crown. He will be replaced in the six-man team by Michael Openshaw.

"It's very disappointing from a team point of view, but I think John has made the right decision for himself," said Newman Brook, Britain's director of endurance running. "He thinks he can do well during the summer."

Mayock plans to have a short rest before preparing for a busy summer which includes the European Championships in Budapest in August and the Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur the following month. He hopes to run the 1500m in both events.

Meanwhile, Britain's preparations for Marrakech have been unwittingly hindered by the London Marathon. Brook had planned to send the team to Lanzarote for 10 days' warm weather training as preparation for conditions they can expect in Morocco.

He was unable to find accommodation on the island because the marathon organisers are taking 500 journalists there on a press trip later this week. He has hurriedly rearranged for the team to train in Faro, Portugal.

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Ice Hockey

Struggling Steelers must show mettle

Vic Batchelder

THE Sheffield Steelers are looking to pull off a conjuring trick in tonight's play-off at Nottingham Panthers. Steelers edged an overtime home win over their nearby rivals on the opening weekend of the play-offs 10 days ago, but have also lost to Newcastle and Ayr — sides the Panthers have since beaten.

Only two of the four teams can progress to the semi-finals from Group A: Ayr, winners of two cups and the Superleague championship, are favourites to be crowned champions. Defeat tonight will make it extremely difficult for Sheffield, who beat Panthers in last season's play-off final.

"We need a result," said Dampier yesterday. "The fans know that we are in for a struggle, but I think that deep in their hearts, they believe that we can pull one more rabbit out of the hat."

Steelers' sixth place in the Superleague last month represented their worst season since joining the top flight in 1993. The club also has financial problems, with the owner George Dodds still seeking a buyer after putting them up for sale 12 months ago.

Dampier denied that defeat tonight could prove terminal. "I don't think the club's future rides on it too heavily," he said. "We are the underdogs — whether we go through is not a major issue."

In contrast, Nottingham are on a roll. Having won at Newcastle on Saturday, they were mighty impressive in beating Ayr 3-2 at home the next evening.

The coach Mike Blaisdell said his side had shown great composure to beat the champions. "Some of the Steelers are playing for their careers and they will make it very tough for us," he said. "It won't be a game for the faint-hearted."

Sport in brief

Table Tennis

Lisa Lomas, who won the English national title for a fourth time on Sunday, has announced her retirement from international table tennis. Richard Jago, England's youngest woman international when she made her debut at 14, she remains the only English player to have won singles medals at European championships.

Results

Football

TENNANTS SCOTTISH CUP

Wolves 0 Dundee 0

SCOTTISH LEAGUE

Third Division

East Striding 0 1

West Striding 0 1

South Striding 0 1

North Striding 0 1

East Striding 0 1

West Striding 0 1

South Striding 0 1

North Striding 0 1

East Striding 0 1

West Striding 0 1

South Striding 0 1

North Striding 0 1

Chess

The world champion Garry Kasparov has been fined \$2,000 by the tournament sponsor Luis Rentaro as he drew 11 of his 12 games at Linares in the elite contest featuring the world's top grandmasters, writes Leonard Barden.

Kasparov several times defied his tournament contract which forbade offering draws before move 40. India's Visy Anand, who won the tournament with Kasparov third,

then turned down a match with the world No. 2 Vladimir Kramnik as a final eliminator for Kasparov's title.

Snooker

Steve Davis, currently ranked 14, strengthened his hopes of staying in the top 16 at the end of a record 19 consecutive seasons with a 5-1 win over Steve James in the Thailand Masters in Bangkok, writes Clive Everton.

With John Higgins, the world No. 2, already elimi-

nated, Ronnie O'Sullivan could go second by reaching the semi-finals. A 5-1 win over David Gray put him through to the last 16.

Tennis

Tim Henman has moved up one place from 20 to 19 in the British No. 3 has been promoted because the Croatian left-hander Goran Ivanisevic has slipped to 21 from 19. Greg Rusedski, Britain's No. 1, remains at six in the latest ATP list.

Bowls

The English champion Robert Newman and Scotland's Sandy Syme will compete in the final of the British Indoor singles championship in Swansea today after contrasting semi-final victories.

Syme, from Coatbridge, comprehensively defeated Belfast's Jonathan Ross 21-4 in 17 ends while Newman, from Reading, was forced to come from behind to beat Radnorshire's Robert Weale 21-18.

Pools Forecast

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP

1. Arsenal 2. Manchester United

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17. Middlesbrough 18. Southampton

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TheGuardian INTERACTIVE

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Cricket

Tour match: Barbados v England XI

England becalmed on a great day to be on the beach

Vic Marks in Bridgetown

THIS was a dreadful day's play, even if it was quite valuable for England's batsmen. Only the real fanatics among the hordes of British punters, many of whom turned up at the weekend, popped in to the Kensington Oval yesterday. For most, the choice between a meaningless match meandering to a draw

Scoreboard

BARBADOS First Innings 472-6 dec. P. C. Holder 150, P. A. Wallace 56, R. L. A. 54, F. L. Rafter 50.	
England XI	
First Innings (overnight: 178-2)	
A. J. Stewart c Holder b Collins	45
P. A. Wallace b Holder b Collins	56
N. Hussain c Griffith b Bligh	44
G. P. Thorpe c Holder b Bligh	45
M. Ramprakash c Holder b Bligh	44
A. J. Hoggie c Holder b Bligh	45
R. C. Russell b Holder	17
R. B. Grant b Holder	18
A. R. Caddick b Holder	3
A. J. Hoggie b Holder	0
C. E. W. Silverwood not out	0
Extras (b6, lb6, wt, nb19)	32
Total (117.2 overs)	288
Barbados 117, 166, 228, 288, 351, 357, 371, 392, 392	
England 24-4-5-79-1; Collins 16-1-60-1; Bligh 15-1-67-1; Rafter 17-2-12-3; Holder 23-5-6-4; Rafter 1-0-2-4.	
Umpires: M. Jones and D. Holder.	

or the pale blue seas lapping up to the white sands was not difficult to resolve.

Theoretically, it was possible to breathe life into this match on a pitch that was more suited to five-day rather than three-day cricket. A couple of early declarations and a target of around 350 might have enticed a few sunbathers, but there was little chance of that.

The priority in these games is not to indulge in some frivolous run-chase. Instead, England were hell-bent on bolstering the confidence of a run-starved middle order. In any case, Barbados may have been wary of defending any target in these sublime batting conditions. All the batsmen — except Jack Russell, who was duped by a leg-spinner again — spent useful time at the crease, though none of them went on to post a hundred. This was more out of carelessness than selflessness, neither Nasser Hussain nor Graham Thorpe are the types to sacrifice their wickets to allow the others some practice — at least not until they have reached three figures.



Point made... Graham Thorpe underlines a solid innings with a shot square of the wicket. The Surrey batsman made 58

The tail were rather less accomplished, and England were bowled out for 582. Hussain continued to bat sedately. Sometimes a perfect batting surface induces extreme caution, the batsman terrified that he might waste his chance. But on 45, he was seduced by an inviting half-volley and slashed his drive into the hands of Adrian Griffith at backward point. Thorpe hit an anonymous 58. He has managed to build a reputation which nearly every English batsman who

has toured the Caribbean over the last two decades has craved: that he is weak against spin bowling (he has been dismissed by a spinner three times in this series). He had plenty of spin bowling yesterday from Winston Reid, a wily left-arm capable of bowling two-minute overs of two paces, and Terry Rollock, a no-nonsense leg-spinner. Thorpe contrived not to damage his reputation.

He now seems obsessed by scoring only behind the wicket against spinners with a motley collection of nudges, nudges, sweeps and squirts. He did this effectively enough but this surface invited a few drives, as well. He tried one off Reid which was edged and dropped at slip. It looks as if he has forgotten how to do it and that he is now modelling his style against spin on Russell, which is a pity.

Mark Ramprakash's play was more pleasing to the eye, apart from his final ugly hook at a long bow, while Adam Hoggie played the only skilful innings — 45 from just 56 balls. Maybe Hoggie was reminding the chairman of selectors David Graveney, who has just returned here, of his one-day prowess.

Graveney discouraged on England's one-day record, he was finalised after the Barbados Test, which starts on Thursday. Additions (minimum of one, maximum of three) to the team of 15 will come from the touring party. Mike Atherton is captain despite his poor form. The announcement of the

South Africa v Pakistan: third Test, fourth day

Pakistan lack heart to survive

Paul Weaver in Port Elizabeth

DAVE RICHARDSON, the former South Africa wicketkeeper turned television commentator, has a nice line in spoonerisms. When Allan Donald was creating mayhem, the Mike man observed: "This comes as no surprise to me. St George's Park is a happy grunting ground for Allan." Unfortunately for Pakistan, the venue also became a happy grunting ground for Paul de Villiers, Paul Adams, Shaun Pollock and anyone else who bothered to turn his arm over against this shambles of a batting side.

When the South Africa captain Hansie Cronje declared his side's innings closed at 206 for seven halfways through the afternoon session yesterday, setting Pakistan 394 to win in nine hours, no one really expected the touring side to get there. After all, their highest winning fourth-innings score was their 315 for nine against Australia in

Karachi in 1994. What was expected of the visitors was a degree of commitment, a certain measure of atonement for their first-innings performance, when they were bowled out for just 106. There was, however, none. When they lost their seventh wicket, they had scored only 101 runs. Cronje was so encouraged that he claimed the extra half-hour, although only three more overs were bowled before the light faded — still 274 runs short of their notional target.

This was the old Pakistan we know and despair of. In Durban, they had paraded their superior talent and South Africa simply could not keep up. Here the home side have unveiled their fighting heart and Pakistan's response has been to shrink back into the shadows. Little wonder that the team coach Haroon Rashid failed to show up for last night's press conference. It would have been nice to know why they changed a winning side.

Bringing back the hugely gifted Wasim Akram was, perhaps, an irresistible option, even though he was clearly not match fit. What was even harder to fathom was the return of Rashid Latif. He might be captain but he is a poor one and an ordinary cricketer, too. He looked a forlorn figure yesterday as he completed his "pair". Earlier, behind the stumps, Charles Hawtry in the Carry On films while Wasim directed most of the operations with his easy authority. Rashid's return further weakened an already suspect batting line-up.

Donald bowled very fast once more, and deserved more than his two wickets. Adams came on and had three for 36 in 16 overs. Apart from Saeed Anwar (55), there was no fight from Pakistan. Earlier, Waqar Younis had made his reverse swing go so well that Pakistan must have wondered what could have been if they had managed another 100 runs in their in-

India v Australia: first Test, fourth day

Warne reels to Tendulkar

SACHIN TENDULKAR struck an unbeaten 155 as India yesterday tightened their grip on the first Test against Australia in Madras. After declaring at 418 for four in their second innings, setting Australia 348 to win, India removed the visitors' top three batsmen for 31 by stumps on the fourth day.

India, who trailed by 71 in their first innings, declared an hour before the close after Tendulkar had hit 14 fours and four sixes. They then ripped into the tourists. Michael Slater was the first to go, dragging a ball from the paceman Jagavallabhi Srinath onto his stumps for 13, and then Greg Blewett was caught at silly point for five off the leg-spinner Anil Kumble's first ball. The captain Mark Taylor made 13 before edging Kumble to the diving Srinath.

Earlier Tendulkar, in a stay of 191 balls, had added 113 runs with Dravid (56) for the third wicket and 127 with the captain Moham-

Motor Racing

Hill lets change of fortune pass him by

Alan Henry on the lessons of McLaren's one-two in the first race of the season

THERE was a poignant moment in the Australian Grand Prix when the two silver-grey McLaren-Mercedes of Mika Hakkinen and David Coulthard swept past Damon Hill's Jordan. Last August Hill dismissed an approach from the McLaren managing director Ron Dennis to discuss a contract with the team. Dennis was suggesting a retainer of \$1 million (£600,000) plus the same amount for each victory, up to a maximum of 12. Hill dismissed the offer as derisory and eventually signed for Jordan for \$4.5 million.

So the 1996 world champion must have felt wistful as he saw Coulthard, his Williams team-mate three years ago, sail through at the wheel of a car which has set the benchmark for the season. The domination of McLaren-Mercedes underlines the harsh realities of grand prix racing in 1998. First, there is not a shred of evidence to suggest that the rule changes requiring narrower cars and grooved tyres have made the racing more competitive. Drivers still find it difficult to run in the turbulence of the car ahead, and the consequent loss of front-wheel grip makes it as hard

as ever to attempt a clean overtaking manoeuvre. Second, it has proved that, when such changes are instigated, the teams with the deepest pockets and most sophisticated resources are the ones best able to respond. McLaren were the best prepared team this weekend and that showed in their results," said Frank Williams. McLaren have not won a championship since 1981 but with an improved V10 Mercedes-Benz engine — and a new version expected when the circus arrives in Europe — plus Bridgestone tyres and the former Williams designer Adrian Newey, they were always likely winners. Moreover, the team came up with a new braking system, the legality of which was accepted yesterday by Williams. "We are all doing it, we certainly are," he said.

And Williams and Ferrari are by no means out of it. Ferrari's Eddie Irvine, who finished fourth behind the two McLarens and Williams's Heinz-Harald Frentzen, said: "The gap to McLaren is nothing like as big as it looked in this race." He pinpointed the Ferrari engine as needing development; it was engine trouble which put out his team-mate Michael Schumacher.

Basketball

Amaechi gives warning he can be even better

Robert Pryce

DEPRESSING news though it may be for anyone forced to guard John Amaechi — and four of the London Towers had a go at the United Nations final — he expects to be better next season. "I'll be working on my conditioning and my passing again and free-throw shooting," he said yesterday, a day after scoring a record 40 points, taking 15 rebounds, winning the Most Valuable Player award and carrying the Sheffield Sharks to an 82-79 victory over the Towers. It is best not to tangle with this man, Amaechi, 6'6" 5in and 20st, subjects himself to a regime of intellectual and athletic self-discipline too cruel to contemplate. He is also the most eloquent of the many critics of the English Basketball Association, whose chief executive has given up an unequal struggle and resigned. The Towers had no answer to Amaechi or his deadly long-range jump shot. "I honestly think my strength is underrated," he said. "But I have a combination of strength and quickness that is unusual. Unfortunately I can't jump to save my life." That may come as some consolation for his opponents. The other is that he is unlikely to be playing in England next season. But it is premature, he says, to link him with any club in the NBA.

Badminton

Clark plea as Goode has to qualify

Richard Jago

JOANNE GOODE, the only home player to have won major open titles in two events, found herself in the strange situation of having to reach the final of the England championships which begin at the National Indoor Arena in Birmingham today. Goode recently became a mother, and although she appears to have regained a high standard in women's and mixed doubles, she and her partners Simon Archer and Donna Kellogg have had to put in extra work before reaching the main draw of the world's oldest open tournament. This has prompted Gill Clark, holder of a record number of England caps and now a television commentator, to plead for a system less inflexibly based on the world rankings. "We need someone with know-how who travels the circuit to make decisions in cases like this," she said. The defending men's singles champion from China, Dong Jiong, yesterday withdrew from the men's singles but the quality of the Asian entry has held up well during the economic crisis in the Far East. But Yonex, the Japanese equipment company, has lost many of its markets and the deadline for the renewal of its backing of the 99-year-old tournament has passed.

Rugby Union

Cardiff in £1.1m shortfall with fear of worse to come

Paul Rees

CARDIFF lost more than £1 million in the first half of the current financial year, a sum which may double if the club lose their High Court action next month against the Welsh Rugby Union. Cardiff, who have 24 international players on their playing staff, made a loss of £1.1 million, with the shortfall being attributed to their dispute with the WRU, which has already cost the club some £400,000 in television income; the lack of a major sponsor; costs incurred in improving Cardiff Arms Park; and the structure of the Welsh club game. A recent meeting of Wales's eight Premier Division clubs was told by Cardiff that they were open to offers for any of their players and that have since tabled a bid for the Wales scrum-half and captain Robert Howley. "It is the middle of March and we have only played three league matches at home," said Cardiff's chief executive Gareth Davies. "It is no wonder we have recorded a loss. The Welsh game has not come up with a structure suitable for the professional age." A war chest of £750,000 has been set up by the club, through cash raised from the sale of Sophia Gardens to Glamorgan County Cricket Club, for their legal

battle with the WRU. Their contention is that they should not be forced to sign a binding, 10-year agreement with the union in return for television and sponsorship income which, they argue, is rightfully theirs anyway. With the highest wage bill among the major Welsh clubs, Cardiff have this season signed the Polish international Gregori Kacala from Brive, two Canadian internationals, John Tait and Bobby Ross, the Wales wing Gareth Thomas and the Wales A lock Tony Rees. The squad has been cut by six recently with the added threat of a summer clear-out. "It has been a pretty expensive year," said Davies.

Gatland keeps faith with Ireland team

WARREN GATLAND, the new Ireland coach, has rewarded the players who came agonisingly close in Paris last weekend to causing the upset of this year's Five Nations by naming an unchanged side to face Wales at Lansdowne Road on Saturday week. Gatland keeps faith with the team beaten 18-16 by France. The only change is among the replacements where the No. 8 Eric Miller of Leicester and London Irish's centre Mark McCullum return.

Miller was not considered for the France match because of a chest infection while McCullum, who was suffering from bruised ribs, now takes the places of Michael Lynch of Young Munster. A final decision on the composition of the seven-man replacements bench will not be made until next week. The former France wing and captain Philippe Saint-André, who missed the Ireland game along with the last four months of action, returns to Gloucester's first team in

Rugby League Lindsay meets an old enemy

Andy Wilson

THE prospect of a World Cup run and funded by Rupert Murdoch's media empire will be laid to rest in Sydney today.

Maurice Lindsay, no longer employed by the Rugby Football League but still chairman of the Super League International Board, will meet Neil Whittaker, chairman of Australia's National Rugby League, to postpone the competition.

It was to have been played in the southern hemisphere this autumn under the banner of Murdoch's Super League. But Super League no longer exists in Australia, after the compromise with the Australian Rugby League to form the NRL last December, so News Corporation now does not run the international game.

Lindsay hopes to set up a full International Board meeting to formulate yet another international programme for the next two or three years, including a new date for the World Cup. He could not be confident of a cordial reception from Whittaker, who succeeded Ken Arthurson as chairman of the ARL last year and led its battle against Super League. Lindsay and Whittaker have never met face to face, and another ARL veteran, John Macdonald, last week put himself forward to succeed Lindsay as International Board chairman.

News of Lindsay's approach to Whittaker was greeted with equanimity yesterday by Neil Tunncliffe, who is expected to be confirmed as Lindsay's successor as RFL chief executive next month.

Tunncliffe and his chairman Sir Rodney Walker remain determined that the RFL, rather than Lindsay's new employer Super League Europe, will continue to represent Britain on any new international board.

The RFL and SLE are also at loggerheads over who will negotiate any new television deal, so Lindsay will doubtless be intrigued to learn when he returns this week that Tunncliffe and his broadcasting executive Dave Callaghan met the BBC and Sky in London yesterday to discuss "all sorts of primary and secondary rights with a view to securing more exposure for the game". Tunncliffe will be able to forget politics tonight and revive memories of relatively carefree days as a student of ancient history at Queen's College, Oxford, when he attends the 18th University March at Richmond.

Tunncliffe also plans to leave Widderspool. They want to build an all-seater stadium in the town. Next Sunday lunchtime's Challenge Cup quarter-final between Wigan and St Helens at Central Park has been made all-ticket. Keith Boyce, who spent many years trying to improve the Headingley cricket square, will now concentrate on the other side of the Football Stand; he has been appointed head groundsman by Leeds.

SportsGuardian

Rugby union: Club v Country wrangle comes to a head



Smiling Saints... Northampton players Tim Rodber (above left), Matt Dawson and Paul Grayson, England's current fly-half (right) have been left on the international shelf by the coach Clive Woodward.

MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: NIGEL FRENCH

Woodward lays down the law: tour with England or face sack

Robert Armstrong and Robert Kitson find Twickenham getting tough with rebels as Australia threaten international sanctions

SHORT of spelling it out in six-foot high letters in weekender on Twickenham's turf, the England coach Clive Woodward could not have made it clearer yesterday that any player hiding behind a club contract and ruling himself out of this summer's tour to New Zealand, Australia and South Africa can wave goodbye to an international career, starting with the Five Nations game against Scotland on Sunday week.

As Australia threatened to call for an international ban on England if they fail to send a full-strength squad across the Equator in June, Woodward opted to leave out the fly-half Paul Grayson and his Northampton team-mates Tim Rodber and Matt Dawson from the rest of the championship.

Northampton's owner Keith Barwell has instructed his first players to rest this summer instead of heading south, and yesterday Woodward reacted

by saying: "Picking Grayson and the other Northampton players to face Scotland and Ireland would undermine everything in terms of standards and principles. The players signed a contract with the RFU last autumn. They are being forced by their owners to break their contracts."

"But we will definitely play in Scotland and we will definitely go on tour. I passionately believe this tour should go ahead, though the agenda is ridiculous and just a New Zealand trip would be excellent. But I cannot be controlled by the RFU or the owners."

Woodward, however, faces the dilemma of having no experienced replacement for Grayson against the Scots. Mike Catt was concussed playing for Bath on Sunday, which leaves Gloucester's Mark Mapletoft and Wasps' Alex King, who is currently injured, as the only first-choice fly-halves available.

Some may see Northampton's original decision not to release their players as a symptom of the wider power struggle between the clubs and the Rugby Football Union, but in Woodward's eyes it has become personal. Yesterday his impassioned appeal was designed to sway the minds of the players involved.



and play for their clubs and I'll find someone else. I can't be held to ransom. I'd like to think the England players will do what they said they'd do when they signed their international agreements earlier this season. Our objective is to win the World Cup in 1999. I've told the players this is possible unless they're prepared to honour their commitment to England."

Woodward has been stung particularly by the persona of their best players are made available for any tour. A failure to do so means that disciplinary action has to be taken against any rebel club refusing to release their players.

In effect, Northampton could be expelled from RFU membership if they continue to flout its regulations.

"Everyone is getting completely fed up with England - and I don't just mean one or two unions," said Dick MacGruther, an Australian RFU member. "England have to stick by its regulations just like everyone else who agrees to go on tour."

Late last year eight fans ("We're not all lifelong," says Hall, "some of them have only been coming 20 years")

formed a new board. One of the fans is the film director Ken Loach. "I just thought the club should have a bit of a shake-up," Loach says. "We got together as an ad-hoc group to fight the proposal and, much to our amazement, a couple of meetings later we found ourselves installed in the boardroom."

The new board went about their task with a gale of energy. Hall, working up to 14 hours a day on an allowance of £100 a week, pored over the accounts and through what he calls "a touch of house-keeping" steered the losses. A share issue raised £24,000 (£1 put in £25 myself," says Hall). And enough a marketing drive better described as enthusiastic than sophisticated, average gates were lifted to the heady, nose bleed-inducing heights of 700.

"We got that by leafletting," says Hall. "Fourteen of us delivered 3,000 leaflets door to door every Thursday night, just to make sure everyone's aware there's a match on."

To raise awareness further, the board is staging Bath City Football Week, starting this Thursday. All sorts of football-related events will take place, including an evening with Malcolm Allison and Tony Book, though some might disagree with the description "football-related" in that case.

"We're now trying to think strategically of how to get this club into the Football League," says Loach. "It will be fascinating to see if success on the pitch can be achieved based on supporter rather than business ownership. The idea is that this will become a club in the proper sense of the word. It will be fun to try, but we've no idea if we'll be any better at delivering success than the old way of doing things."

There are plenty who might say the Bath experiment couldn't do worse. The big question, though, is: do the Bath revolutionaries believe their experience could act as a model for club ownership elsewhere? Could it instruct oppressed majorities like the Free The Manchester 30,000 campaigners, for instance, who are seeking to wrest control of Manchester City and put it in the hands of fans?

"You have to wonder because the problems of bigger clubs are so much greater than those we have," says Hall. "Mind you, what we are applying here is common sense. And that seems to be a common-sense that's somewhat lacking in some of the clubs."

Never mind the chairmanship of Bath City, give that man Graham Kelly's job.

Details of the Bath City Football Week on 01225 423087.

Fanfare for the common fan at Bath FC



Jim White

IN BATH, the locals have come up with an idea which, were it to be applied at Manchester City, Luton Town, Hull City, Doncaster or indeed virtually any other football club you could mention, would not so much cheer up the fans as send them running round the pitch with their shirts over their heads in celebration.

On match days at Bath City FC's Twerton Park ground, up in the directors box you will not see free loaders slipping a few glasses of hospitality down their necks, there's no sight of a local butcher or a chairman polishing his ego, there's no City financial wizard contemplating the profits from his next piece of asset-stripping. In fact the box is completely empty.

"You'll find no one in it at all on a Saturday," says Steve Hall, City's newly installed chairman. "That's because we're all stood on the terraces where we've been for years."

Bath, it seems, is the unlikely setting for a football revolution. In a place more usually associated with Barbours and four-wheel drives and the pursuit of an oval ball, a grassroots uprising has brushed off the old order. In Bath, the fans have taken over.

The revolution began back in November when the then-chairman Keith Foster, faced with £300,000 of debt and weekly losses of more than £5,000, decided the best thing to do was to sell the ground and move to a temporary home somewhere else. He didn't know where, but somewhere.

Fans of the 109-year-old non-league club — once of the Vauxhall Conference, now on the next rung down in the Dr Martens Premier — were outraged. They approached Foster with an alternative plan: they should take over. In a move not so much unusual in football circles as unique, Foster agreed the fans were the best people to run their club. So he stood aside.

To be perfectly honest, I think he was desperate," says Hall. "But none the less, the whole thing hinged on Keith Foster and he accepted the supporters' plan."

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formed a new board. One of the fans is the film director Ken Loach. "I just thought the club should have a bit of a shake-up," Loach says. "We got together as an ad-hoc group to fight the proposal and, much to our amazement, a couple of meetings later we found ourselves installed in the boardroom."

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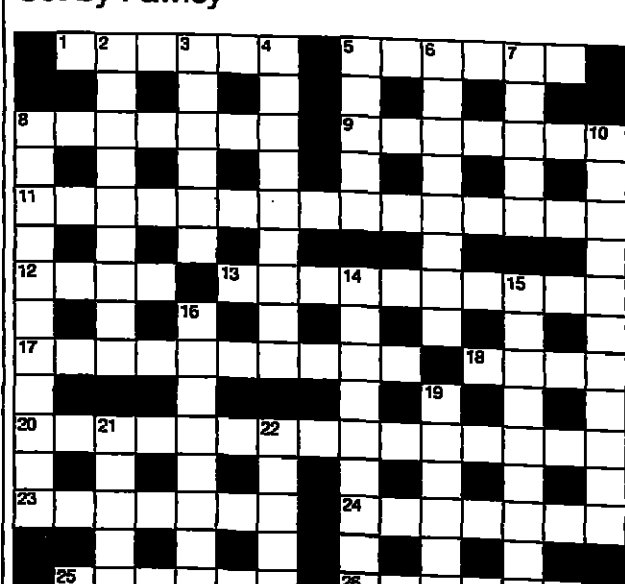
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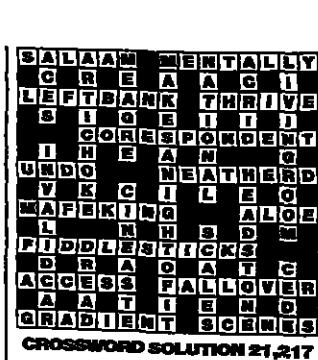
Details of the Bath City Football Week on 01225 423087.

Guardian Crossword No 21,218

Set by Fawley



- Across**
- 1 Removing middle bit, twiggled puzzling device (5)
 - 2 Pretend to have influence (6)
 - 3 Australian runner snatches clothing back, giving offence (7)
 - 4 Whinges, almost going grey? (7)
 - 5 Cold snack and drink when touring lake — island's lake (10,5)
 - 6 60s singer John twice recorded a classic (4)
 - 7 One may be used to cut out some sexy pictures (4,5)
 - 8 Subtly, role developed — its performance is electric (10)
 - 9 Drink noisily, endlessly, and talk drunkenly (4)
 - 10 Group, after ringing pressman, rest securely in lodgings (3,3,9)
 - 11 Latitude constantly shown in longest world tour (7)
 - 12 Part of forces prohibited verbal form of identification (7)
 - 13 Jack has nearly £10 backing Spanish horse (6)
 - 14 Summons appears days before clinching approval (6)
- Down**
- 1 Oil Gorbilney, last pair lost — possibly tricky situation (9)
 - 2 Elderly relative, say, put up in country house (6)
 - 3 By becoming heated, they may restrict Royal Mail completely (9)
 - 4 Noble element forms over half Jason's crew (9)
 - 5 Cooks with bad ingredient? Knickers! (8)
 - 6 Persuade to be firm, standing by religion (5)



- CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,217**
- 1 Lacking good taste (11)
 - 2 Happily given transport, see her taxi lead off (11)
 - 3 50% of pay rises consumed vital resources — give details (9)
 - 4 Charge for accommodation made Alec glare furiously (9)
 - 5 Seafood frequently imported by Wales, we hear (8)
 - 6 Second to ask out topos page 3 girl with hands on hips? (6)
 - 7 Put out, having the same employment (5)
 - 8 Pop in suddenly, making an effort (5)
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Protest against McLaren rejected

John Duncan on the no-action reaction to the 'after you' finish by David Coulthard

DAVID COULTHARD and Mika Hakkinen were within their rights to decide which of them would win Sunday's Australian Grand Prix, the sport's governing body decided yesterday.

The organiser of the race, Ron Walker, chairman of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, had lodged a complaint with the FIA after Coulthard voluntarily gave up the lead to his McLaren team-mate near the end of the race.

In a statement the FIA said it would be wrong to criticise or sanction the McLaren team or drivers.

That is unlikely to satisfy the 105,000 spectators who saw the winner of the race decided by a pact between the drivers that whoever was leading into the first corner would be allowed to win.

Walker had complained to the FIA that it was not the right of team owners or drivers to decide who won a race and that to fix a race in this manner was contrary to the spirit of a fair, sporting contest.

Bookmakers have responded to the result by allowing betting on teams as well as drivers to win races, starting at the next grand prix in Brazil on March 29, but they remained unhappy yesterday at the "highly unsatisfactory" way in which the race finished.

"We don't make any contribution to Formula One so we are not in a position to tell them how to run it," said William Hill's spokesman Graham Sharpe.

"But events like this can only discourage spectators to bet on the outcome. Punters and viewers would like to think the drivers are driving hell for leather for themselves. But the vital thing is to subsume your own interest for the sake of the team."

That view was not accepted by one punter who had bet £2,000 on Coulthard to win. "If I could speak to David Coulthard I would tap him on the shoulder and tell him that he owed me money," said Kenneth Dyke from Hereford. "I put money on him and at the end of the race found he didn't really want to win."

Coulthard hopes Hakkinen will return the favour in Brazil. "I am expecting to be repaid," he said. "I could have won but hopefully we will put this to bed after the next race and carry on from there."

"After two races we should be on an even keel so there won't be a points disadvantage. I am not giving away four points. I am putting my trust in the team, in Mika and all the other people around. I have no reason to doubt them."

In other sports a contrived result would be the subject of an inquiry. "If two jockeys organised who would win a race together there would be a major investigation," a Jockey Club spokesman said yesterday.

Formula One is a minor part of betting, estimated at less than £100,000 each weekend of racing. "We have suggested to the FIA that they might like to publish any team orders before the race rather than after it," said Sharpe.

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Jodi Foster probably became pregnant without one. A picture of one, by photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, was seized by West Midlands Police as indecent. It's ironic that, in the year The Full Monty has become Britain's biggest box office hit, the male organ it celebrates is being banished and banned.

Dea Birkett stands up for the humble penis

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